THE WINDFALL

by

WILLIAM O. STODDARD

Ralph C. Stoddard
from his father.

Madison, New Jersey,
Christmas, 1903.
William C. Stoddard

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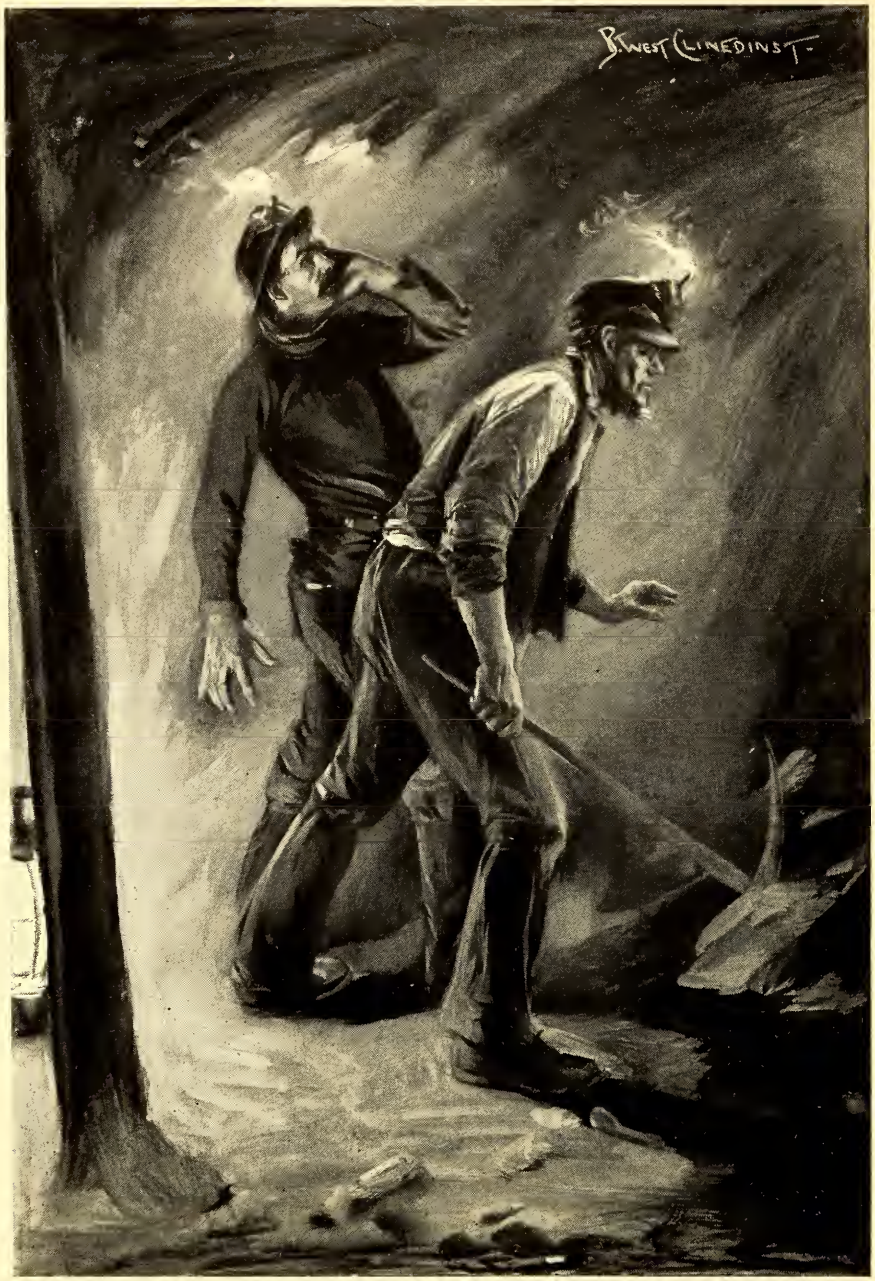

A great cry sounded from out the blackness.

(See page 2.)

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WILLIAM O. STODDARD

AUTHOR OF
CROWDED OUT O' CROFIELD, CHRIS THE MODEL MAKER, LITTLE SMOKE,
ON THE OLD FRONTIER, THE BATTLE OF NEW YORK, ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY B. WEST CLINEDINST

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THE WINDFALL.

CHAPTER I.

UNDERGROUND AND UP ABOVE GROUND.

"HARK, mon! Dinna you hear it? Mind, it's the roof o' the drift."

The two men, who had been toiling with picks in their hands, stood like statues. It was not a loud sound to which they had listened. Nothing but a succession of dull thuds and a rushing noise, while a gust of air came along the gallery to flicker the candles that were stuck in the crevices of the coal.

"Mate!" exclaimed the second miner, "the men are calling. Take your light! Come!"

Weird enough were the warning voices that answered one another through the echoing corridors, but this pair of miners did not seem in the least degree panic-stricken. They strode forward steadily until one of them exclaimed:

"On, mon alive! There's a water-burst! There might be a flud!"

"God save us a' if there is, Fergus McCracken," almost groaned the other. "It's my wife an' bairns I'm thinkin' o'."

"I ne'er had bairns o' my ain," responded Fergus.

He was a stalwart man but gray, while the other could not have been over thirty. The gallery they were in ran into another, somewhat wider, as they walked on; but just as the younger miner exclaimed, exultingly, "We're out i' the far drift! Come alang!" there was a louder crash than any yet, and a great cry from out the blackness beyond them sounded like a wail:

"The roof is down! We're a' shut in, an' th' mine's a-floodin'! Come, a', to th' main drift beyond th' timber-head, and bring your tools."

"It's the lone chance," said Fergus McCracken calmly; but just then he fell to the floor of the gallery, smitten down by something that struck him heavily from overhead.

Away down below the surface of the earth ran the galleries of the gloomy and perilous mine. Perhaps it

was as far above ground, at that hour, that a sharp, decisive voice remarked:

"Car'line, the garret's done. It's as neat as wax. I'll go down and 'tend to the geese. Somebody may have come, too. Just you look around before you come down."

"There isn't another thing to do, mother," replied Car'line. But that was all, for in a moment more she was alone in the garret.

She may have been over fifteen, and her face had a grave, quiet look, in marked contrast with the bustling energy expressed by every word and movement of her mother. There was a great deal to be seen in the garret, for it looked like a kind of family curiosity-shop, stored with the relics of several generations of country housekeeping. Car'line had been glancing around her, at the old spinning-wheels and the other things, but she now walked slowly to the western window and looked out. It was wide open, and the wind that blew in, fluttering her loose, dark curls, was not warm, but it was not by any means cold.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she said. "But to think of

having such weather as this is right in the middle of winter! "

From that high post of observation a good view could be had of a long reach of the Liffenkill Valley, with glimpses of the little river itself here and there. The village of Salterville was away at the left, southerly, out of sight, but Car'line was not trying to see anything so near. She was staring away across the leafless forests and the dark masses of the cedar and hemlock evergreens, at the dim, blue outlines of the Broken Ridge Mountains. There was snow enough there, if there was as yet but little in the neighborhood of Salterville. It was a wild, rough, rugged country, where only the valleys were fit to live in and where even the natural beauty of the mountains was marred with furnace smoke. Car'line was speaking of that when she said:

" How it rises!—coke works and iron works! They say the coal mines are running away in. They'll have to stop somewhere some day. I almost hate to think of mines."

She was silent then, but she seemed to be one of those girls who are fond of talking to themselves. They are generally girls whose lives have been spent, in great

measure, apart from other young people. She now turned from the window as if for another look at the curious contents of the garret. An old, faded, green-silk "calash" hung from a nail near her.

"That was grandmother's," she remarked. "Mother says she could spin and weave and do almost anything. They didn't burn coal then. There wasn't one mine—coal or iron either—in all the Broken Ridge Mountains. I wish there weren't any now. I hate to have men digging those everlasting burrows under ground. Worse than moles. Wearing out their lives down there in the dark. No sun. It's dreadful!"

While Car'line was considering the various matters to be seen from her garret window, within and without, her mother had flitted from room to room of the second story of the house, and she had now appeared on the ground floor, still armed with a long-handled dusting-brush. She was holding up this household weapon somewhat threateningly when she came out at the kitchen doorway and stood still on the step.

A large flock of geese, in an inclosure at some distance up the hillside, at once began to squawk at each other and to arrange their feathers as if for an expected

inspection. There was not a speck of dust on one of them, but all saw Mrs. Van Koven, and she might be coming to inquire. It was not the season of the year for them to be in danger of losing anything they had on, and their winter dresses had a pleasant snowy look.

Not so much snowy as frosty was the aspect of a short, squarely-built, elderly man who now stood in front of Mrs. Van Koven, leaning forward and holding up his weight by a crooked-headed cane in each hand while he remarked:

"I've been here a-waiting and a-waiting. Where have you been? I just hollered, and not a living soul——"

"I've been away up in the garret," snapped Mrs. Van Koven. "Is there anything the matter with Mrs. Craik? Couldn't you ha' sent Andy?"

"Garret!" he said. "Dirt and cobwebs! I s'pose the roof's leaking. That'll be bad for you if there's any rain coming.—Andy? He's gone fishing, but he won't catch anything. Have you seen anything of my big brown hen and six chickens? She got away——"

"Chickens?" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven. "You

don't mean to say that old critter's been sitting? In winter! And six of 'em hatched out?"

"Well, no," responded Mr. Craik. "There's thirteen in all out o' nineteen eggs she hid in the barn. Mrs. Craik's got seven of 'em penned up in the sitting-room. She's a' 'tending to the feeding of 'em. The old hen and the other six came down this way a-visiting. —You're looking kind o' peaked this morning. I'll just go to the barnyard and find that hen——"

"No, you needn't," said Mrs. Van Koven, turning to re-enter the house. "Come in and sit down. Car'line 'll hunt for your chicks.—Why doesn't that girl get through with that garret and come downstairs? There wasn't anything left to do.—Did you say Andy ran away?"

"No, I didn't," said Mr. Craik, as he engineered his way after her, with a thump! thump! thump of his two canes. "I told him he'd better get a mess of fish after he'd mended the north fence, and shelled some corn, and chopped some wood, and cleaned the hog-pen——"

"Fish!" ejaculated Mrs. Van Koven. "There's nothing but bullheads in the Liffenkill nowadays."

"Glad you're cleaning your garret," remarked Mr. Craik. "I guess 'twas about time. Dirt accumulates. What are you going to do with your geese? You don't think of feeding 'em all winter? Geese don't pay their keep. Yours are getting thin, too——"

"Does Mrs. Craik want any feathers?" she interrupted him. But he was on the stoop now, staring in all directions up and down the country as he replied:

"Feathers are kind of unhealthy, anyhow. I wish I could see that hen."

"Soon as Car'line comes down she'll take a look," said Mrs. Van Koven. "That old critter always did come here to get something to eat. Had to steal from my ducks and geese."

"It's awful hard times," rejoined Mr. Craik, as if willing to try another subject. "All the mines are going again—furnaces too; but they're losing money. But, Mrs. Van Koven, speaking of mines, I'm as sure as ever I was that there's a fortune under all this land on this side o' the Liffenkill."

"I don't believe it," said she. "Tom Van Koven, when he was alive, spent almost all he had trying to find it. If it's there, it's down at the center o' the earth.

I don't want to hear any more 'bout mines. There's more money in geese.—But if there isn't that old hen!"

Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, with her feathers bristling in all directions and her entire aspect declaring her agitation and anxiety, down the walk at the side of the house came the old brown hen, rallying her six yellow children as she could. They were a disobedient lot at best, and they were enthusiastically exploring a strange country.

"I declare!" said Mr. Craik. "To think of her bringing those things all the way down here from our house! I'll just drive them home."

"Car'line?" That was Mrs. Van Koven's voice shouting up the stairway, but at that moment there was nobody at all in the upper part of the house.

Car'line was already downstairs and out at the front gate. She had found nobody there to see or talk to, and so she stood with her back against the gate, and she seemed to be looking at the house as if it might be something new to her. It was a very gray, old house, without a new spot on it. There were no blinds, and the white muslin curtains inside the windows were only a

paler variation from the gray tint of the paint that was so nearly all peeled off from the clapboards.

The only color-relief was from the winter skeleton of the great Virginia creeper that went up over the porch and clung so desperately to the lower edges of the second-story window frames.

All the scenery of the valley was now behind her, but Car'line's face looked more wistful than ever, and there was a shade of discontent in it up to the moment when a shrill voice shouted in her very ears:

"Whoop! Want any catfish? Perch? Pumpkin seeds? Whoot!"

"Andy!" she exclaimed, whirling around. "Why —yes—you've caught some——"

"More'n these," said Andy, holding up the string of fish. "Left the rest at home. Mother said bring this lot to your house. Father's here, somewhere, hunting for his hen. The cat got two o' the other chicks. Leaves 'leven."

"Those are big bullheads," she began.

"Car'line? Why don't you come when I call you? Here's old Mr. Craik, hardly able to walk."

"Has he found his hen?" shouted Andy. "She'd better come home, or that cat won't leave her one of 'em."

"Andrew"—it was his father's voice—"you come and drive this hen home. And go to the village and see if Sam Larned has filed that saw; and I want you to stay right here and clean those fish for Mrs. Van Koven. You needn't ha' been so long catching just them——"

"Had to mend the boat," said Andy cheerfully. "I'll drive the hen, but the saw won't be done to-day. Sam's gone to the railway. That there mine inspector's coming again. I saw him. He's got two o' the best dogs. They're setters."

"He can't bring dogs to my house," interrupted Mrs. Van Koven. "I won't board him again, nohow, and have dogs around the place chasing the geese, and hearing him talk all the while about mines. I hate 'em! Car'line, you can take the fish—or I will. But just look at that hen!"

The old brown had succeeded in leading her army around the corner of the house, and behind her followed her owner; but she had turned upon him as an

enemy and was charging angrily against his canes with a storm of excited clucking.

"I can get her home," said Mr. Craik. "But, Mrs. Van Koven, if that there inspector comes I can't have Andy down here all the while hearing him spin yarns to Car'line. He's a young fool, and I guess he isn't much of an engineer. The railway companies 'll hire almost anything. He doesn't believe there's any coal mine under my farm."

"Andy," said Mrs. Van Koven, "thank your mother for me for those fish. But, if you see Mr. Rathburn you can just tell him——"

"Oh!" said Andy, "he can keep his dogs at our house. They're just the cleanest kind. Not a flea on 'em. They can a'most talk. You never saw such dogs. They're handsome! Fine!"

Car'line had darted away, but now she was back again, with a basket. The chicks were scooped up and put in and covered up before their mother could say more than a small part of what she thought about it.

"Car'line," said Andy just before he went, "Mr. Rathburn did say he was coming to your house. He's

only to stay a week this time. I'm going to make him tell me some more."

"About mines?" she responded thoughtfully. "I don't care to hear any more about mines. Sometimes I almost hate 'em. But everybody likes Mr. Rathburn. I'm glad he is coming. He isn't any trouble at all, but you can keep the dogs."

"I guess I will," said Andy.

CHAPTER II.

A GREAT LADY.

THE Van Koven house seemed to grow grayer and older when one walked away to a little distance and looked back at it. It was not only aged but it was also old-fashioned. It was not small, but it was very low between joints, and it looked lower outside because there was a high hill for a background behind it. Nevertheless, the house stood upon a gentle knoll and its backyard went down into a hollow, through which, between the dwelling and the barns, ran a rivulet about six yards wide. This had been put there for the convenience of Mrs. Van Koven's ducks and geese. It would have been in the way of her other poultry and of Mr. Craik's hen if it had not been for a wooden bridge, wide enough for a wagon, at the end of the tanbark walk through the garden, just where the walk and the driveway from the road ran into each other.

Beyond the bridge the land rose to the barns, and from the further end of the barnyard it went up pretty sharply, but there were broad and pretty level fields above and below on either side. There was a great deal of good land in the Van Koven farm along under that high bluff. So there was of the Craik farm, the next up the Liffenkill Creek, and there were good farms on the opposite bank. Farther down the creek the valley widened and the fields could be wider, with room for Salterville and for the pond and dam below the village. In this there were pretty good houses, not including all the older ones in the main street. Away on down, back from the creek, were really fine residences of rich people—bankers, lawyers, mine-owners, and men who earned their living by watching for good chances. As to these latter, some of their houses were sold out every now and then to give somebody else a chance to live in them. Andy Craik must have been thinking of them as he walked along homeward, for he remarked:

"Mrs. Van Koven says that if a fellow speckillates or goes to owning mines, next thing you hear is that he's sold his house and gone West. I don't care; I just

hope Rathburn 'll come. I'll get him to leave his dogs at our house."

He was evidently deeply interested in the mining engineer and his dogs, but he was trudging along rapidly and had left his father far behind. Mr. Craik, indeed, was in no hurry, and he had company. The brown hen had in some manner become confused in mind. Andy and his basket had gone out of it, and she was under a strong delusion that old Mr. Craik, or his canes, contained her six chickens. Around about him, therefore, she clucked, and scolded, and ruffled, and he offered her no kind of explanation.

His face wore a contented expression—such as the whole face of Nature will often wear of a frosty morning—and he seemed almost to enjoy the occasional rheumatic twinges which came to him as he worked his canes.

"I'm glad he's coming," he said. "I'll ask him again. He knows all this country. He's been up, and he's been down, and he's been all around. I always thought so. It's right down under here, I don't know how far. Tom Van Koven, he said so. It had ought to be so. Best coal in the world. All under my farm—and under Malviny Van Koven's. I haven't been down

to the bottom of 'most every mine in Pennsylvany for nothing. If Rathburn doesn't agree with me he just doesn't know anything 'bout mines. I guess we sha'n't see much of him; but if he boards at Malviny's and leaves his dogs at our place with Andy, I'll get chances to find out how much he can tell me. I wouldn't have to do another stroke o' work as long as I lived. Malviny—she couldn't stop."

People brought up within a short quarter of a mile of each other, and going to the same village school to begin with, are apt to be pretty well acquainted. If Mrs. Van Koven knew Mr. Craik's peculiarities of talk and temper, so that she did not mind them, he knew her like a book.

She was not in her house now, but out at the barn, and no cow could have asked for a tidier place of residence than was the one concerning which she complained:

"I'll have it slicked up before more snow comes if I have to hire it done. I do s'pose I haven't more'n enough feed for all those geese. I may have to sell some of 'em, and they're fat as butter."

She had made it their duty to be so, and when she

walked back toward the house and stood still for several seconds on the bridge across the little stream, they all, with one accord, gave up whatever else they were doing and stood still and looked at her.

Car'line was not just then admiring anything or anybody. She was in one of the second-story front rooms, and she suddenly turned toward the nearest window, exclaiming:

"Oh! What's that?"

Anything like a loud noise upon so quiet a road as ran before the Van Koven place might well startle whoever heard it.

"Why! How dreadful!" She was at the window now. "It's Mrs. Medway, and she's broken down. I hope she isn't hurt. I'll run right down."

Mrs. Medway had not broken down at all, but the forward axle of her barouche had snapped near the wheel right before the Van Koven gate. All the front part of the vehicle had careened, and the coachman now lay scattered upon the ground, clinging bravely to his reins and shouting to his horses to "Whoa!"

They were doing so, as if they had no idea of doing anything else, and the near horse was trying to turn his

head far enough around to see what might be the matter. Thus far he had discovered nothing to justify him in kicking or running, but a large, well-dressed dame, who had been sitting on the back seat, had been unexpectedly pitched forward so that she now leaned half way out over the arm of the front seat and shouted:

"Michael! Michael! What has happened? Stop them! Hold them! I shall be killed if you don't. Oh, dear me! This is too ridiculous!"

That had been Car'line's first impression; but she now came swiftly out through the gate. She sprang right over the sprawling Michael, and just as Mrs. Medway was getting a good hold of the arm of the seat and was trying to find her feet, two young, strong hands were at her waist lifting energetically.

"Why, how strong you are!" exclaimed Mrs. Medway. "It slants so! I shall pitch out——"

"No, you won't," said Car'line, "not unless the horses start."

"They won't, ma'am," said Michael. "I'm oop now, and I can howld thim. They're not running away, but, Howly Moses! how they'd ha' smashed the rig if it had frighted 'em!"

They were a pair of lambs just then, for the off horse was nibbling at his comrade's ear, while Mrs. Medway continued her half-frantic efforts to get out of her broken-down carriage alive.

"There," she exclaimed, "I'm so thankful! What a narrow escape! I might have broken my precious neck. Caroline Van Koven, I'm so glad you're here!"

"Come right into the house," said Car'line. "You can rest yourself. But what'll you do? Michael can't mend that axle."

"I'll not thry, miss," said Michael. "'Twas no fault o' mine at all. I'll go for another carriage, ma'am. It'll not take me long."

He was unhitching the fat span, a little gingerly, as if they might, after all, show that they had nerves of their own.

"Quick as you can!" replied his mistress in a tone which showed that she had not quite recovered hers.

Car'line was not at all nervous, but there were indications that she was afraid of Mrs. Medway. It had indeed been something of a shock to see one of the most important women in all the Liffenkill Valley in actual danger of wreck and ruin.

"I think I'd have screamed as loudly as she did," thought Car'line. "Seems to me it's the first thing I ever saw happen. I'm glad it happened right here."

Then another kind of thoughts rushed in and she remembered like a flash all she knew of Mrs. Medway. She had never been inside the gate of the ample grounds of the Medway place, a mile below Salterville, but she knew that the owner of the great stone house was all the while in Congress and was going to be Governor of the State some day. She knew, for she had been told so, that his remarkable wife spent her winters in Washington and her summers in Saratoga or in Europe, and that she was a very good woman, but was dreadfully fashionable.

Just as Michael marched away with his team Car'line astonished herself by asking:

"Oh, Mrs. Medway, didn't it hurt you?"

She felt instantly that she was too young and the house she lived in was too homely for her to have spoken so freely; but Mrs. Medway was looking at the wreck, and she remarked:

"I never! Well! I was on an ocean steamship once

when the axle broke, but I never had such a thing as this is happen to me."

"Why, Mrs. Medway," said Car'line, forgetting herself again, "I didn't know that ships had any axle."

"Of course not," said Mrs. Medway, "but it's all the same when it breaks. It's a long iron beam that twists the propeller, and if it breaks off there's an awful time. Another steamer had to come and tow us home. We were away out on the Atlantic."

Car'line stared at her. It was almost unreal to see a woman who had been where Mrs. Medway had and who now had just been pitched almost out of her own barouche.

"Did you scream?" she said.

"Everybody did," replied Mrs. Medway, "it thumped about so.—But, oh, dear me! I've hurt my foot."

She may have felt it a little before that, but a sharp twinge of pain came as she turned from looking at the carriage and tried to walk to the gate.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" exclaimed Car'line. "I hope it isn't broken."

She was not yet thinking very clearly, and Mrs.

Medway half laughed, but she winced, too, as she responded:

"No, not so bad as that. I must go in and get my shoe off. I guess I couldn't dance very well just now."

"Why, you don't ever dance, do you?" said Car'line, stepping around to the lame side to be leaned on.

Not only were Mrs. Medway's weight and dignity manifestly contrary to such an idea, but Car'line knew that her own mother would not have danced for anything in the world. She was aware, therefore, of an entirely new sensation when Mrs. Medway laughed and winced again and answered:

"You think I can't dance? Well, I went to the Prince of Wales's ball once, and I danced with the Duke of Argyle."

Car'line had but a dim idea of who that Duke might be, but she listened in silence, for she was lifting with all the strength she had. They were in the gateway now, and were progressing very well toward the door.

"I'm glad mother didn't hear that," thought Car'line, "she has so much respect for Mrs. Medway. She's always giving money to the church, and to the poor, and to everything. I don't believe she really dances much."

At all events, Mrs. Medway was pretty lame just now, and her walk to the door was so slow that before she got there Mrs. Van Koven herself came hurrying through the house and down the steps. That was the last of any responsibility resting upon the head of Car'-line; but Mrs. Medway sensibly remarked:

"Glad it happened when I had a place to go into. When the propeller shaft broke we were away out at sea, and if she'd sunk we'd all have gone to the bottom."

"Oh, dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven, "I'm so sorry! Car'line, open the parlor door. Get the big rocking-chair ready. Go to the kitchen and get some hot water. Go upstairs for some flannen from my drawer. Get the pain-killer. Bring a pillow. Fetch the camphor bottle.—Come right in, Mrs. Medway. I'm glad you was hurt right in front of our house!"

"I wish I hadn't been hurt anywhere," somewhat positively responded Mrs. Medway, limping on into the parlor.

CHAPTER III.

THE BREAK IN THE MINE.

THE Craik farmhouse was smaller than that of the Van Koven's. It could be seen better at a few yards' distance, now that the winter winds had taken off the leaves from the trees and vines and shrubbery which hid it in summer. It was down so near the margin of the creek that Andy Craik could stand on the bank and catch fish without being beyond call from the house. Not that he ever did so, if he could help it, for he had a strong suspicion that the fish in that stream knew his house to be dangerous and would refrain from biting until he went after them in his boat to some deep "holes" away up almost to the railroad bridge. He had never known a fish to bite under that bridge. They all kept away on account of the trains and the thundering locomotives. A train always makes more noise on a bridge than it does anywhere else. The whistle of the afternoon express was sounding when

Andy reached his own kitchen door with his basket of chicks. That is, the whistle had whistled at the bridge, and then its hoarse shriek had cut loose from the steam pipe and had gone away in all directions. It went in among the echoing gaps and ledges of the Broken Ridge Mountains. It swept, with a rush of startling sound, among the red and yellow remnants of the forest foliage. It discovered the Liffenkill with a hoot, and followed its crooked career until it drew near Salterville; but there the whistle seemed—to Andy—to stop at his place as if it had no more to do. He had just put down his basket when he heard a loud,

"Oh, my! There's that cat again!"

"No, 'tisn't, mother," shouted back Andy. "It's another cat. That old Maltee of ours told her where to go for 'em. She's got one. She's a tortus."

So she had and so she was. One more of the brown hen's treasures left at home when she went a-visiting that day would never be seen again by her, cluck she never so loudly.

"Too bad!" exclaimed his mother. "Did you take Mrs. Van Koven those fish?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Andy, "and I brought home

the rest of the chickens. Father and the old hen are coming.—Hurrah! Oh, mother, there are Rathburn's dogs!"

He should have said "Here is Mr. Rathburn," for a loud voice hailed him with "Hullo, Andy, I want to see your father or your mother."

"Mother's here," said Andy; but the newcomer stepped past him as if in haste, and Mrs. Craik may have read something in the sound of his voice, for she was already in the doorway.

A medium-sized young fellow with no beard and with slender moustaches, but with a bronzed, brave-looking face and piercing black eyes. Handsome, alert, vigorous, but at present with a very serious expression of face.

"What's the matter, Mr. Rathburn?" came very placidly from Andy's plump and smiling mother. "Anything we can do for you? Our hired man'll be back from the hill pretty soon."

"Can't wait, Mrs. Craik," said the young engineer. "No shooting for me just now. If you'll tell Mrs. Van Koven I'd like to come there again in a week or so, and if Andy can keep the dogs——"

"Of course he can," she said.

"A messenger from down the road just found me to say Mine No. 3 is flooding. Part of it is caved in. Men shut up in it. Danger of their lives. I must go at once. Can't wait a minute."

"Oh, it's awful!" exclaimed Mrs. Craik.—"Andy, tie up the dogs in the woodhouse."

They were a fine pair of setters and they had undertaken to discover at once any game there might be on that place. They were down by the water now, and the tortoise-shell cat was up an apple tree, but she had stuck to her own game, and the brown hen's chick was also up where the pippins had been.

A shrill whistle from Rathburn brought the dogs to his side, but they sniffed around Andy very inquiringly, and one of them growled a little. It was because Andy claimed too intimate an acquaintance at once without an introduction. Rathburn mended that by leading them to the woodshed, making them "Down charge!" and chaining them, while Andy treated them very much as if they were two other boys, real good fellows, come to visit him.

"It's awful about those men!"

That was what Mrs. Craik repeated to her husband when he and his hen came around the house to inquire if Andy had returned safely. She told all she had learned from Rathburn, and if she was not excited her husband was. That appeared to be one of the strong points of contrast between them, for she looked like an habitually undisturbed woman. They are worth their weight in gold—those calm, kindly, thoughtful women, who can do or suffer as much as anybody and make no fuss about it whatever.

"Andy," shouted his father, "are the dogs tied up? —Tell me all about it, Mr. Rathburn. Sorry you're not coming right here now. Are the men all drowned? No hope for 'em? I'm afraid so. Too bad! Ruin the mine."

"Can't tell yet," said Rathburn. "I'll know more when I get there.—Andy, my satchel's at the gate. Bring it in. Package of books, too. Open it and read 'em all.—Good-bye, Mrs. Craik, I'm off."

"Can't you stay and eat——"

"No, ma'am, I couldn't eat. Think o' those men! I may be able to do something.—Bye, Andy. Take good care o' the dogs. Take 'em out rabbit shooting."

He was away, as fast as he could walk, and he was evidently under very strong feeling concerning his fellow-workmen imprisoned somewhere down in the black recesses of the flooded coal mine.

"Dead or alive!"

Those were the words Mr. Craik used over and over several times before he said anything else; but his other thoughts came to him then.

"Sarah," he remarked, "that there hen was at Mrs. Van Koven's."

"The hen!" said Mrs. Craik, almost sharply, for her. "Malviny ought to know about Rathburn.—Did you or Andy clean those fish?"

"Andrew," shouted his father, "come away from those dogs. You'll have to feed 'em and water 'em. Bring in Mr. Rathburn's things. Go right straight to Mrs. Van Koven and tell her about him. Tell her the men in the mine ain't drowned yet, and we hope they won't be. And just you clean those fish for 'em. You ought not to ha' come away without it. Come back—now, do you hear?—soon's you've given her Mr. Rathburn's message. Don't you wait a minute."

Andy had left the dogs at once, and they pulled at

their chains as if they wanted to go with him, but they were thinking of their master while they yelped after their new acquaintance.

His string of directions followed him as far as the front gate, but he got away from it there. He swung the somewhat heavy portmanteau upon the piazza and picked up the package.

"Books?" he said. "I don't want any books. I'm glad he left the dogs, though. Bob and Jim. They'll know me soon's I feed 'em. Ripping good dogs! I'll go right down to Mrs. Van Koven's. If there's anything I do hate, it's cleaning bullheads."

Nevertheless, when he reached the Van Koven place and went around to the rear of the house there was the string of fish in the water-pail, where Mrs. Van Koven had left them. They looked like a disagreeable lot of fish, and he remarked:

"Guess I'll go in and tell her about Rathburn before I take hold of 'em."

Small ceremony was customary among neighbors so close as they were, and Andy entered the house as if it had been his own. Nobody was in the kitchen. Nobody was in the sitting-room.

"Never knew of their being in the parlor," thought Andy, "but I'll try."

The door of that generally unoccupied room was open, and his next astonishment was voices.

"Gently, Caroline. Don't lace the boot too tightly. It feels better. Guess it's a pretty bad sprain. That wretched shaft—I mean axle! Oh, dear, how vexed I am! I shan't walk for weeks."

Andy was positive that he heard Car'line say:

"Nor dance either." But her mother exclaimed instantly:

"Car'line!" and before either of them could add another word Andy was in the doorway declaring his errand.

"I'll clean the fish, Mrs. Van Koven," he said. "But Rathburn's been at our house and he's left his dogs there, and his baggage. He'll be here next week —but one of the mines has busted and the men are all drowning and he's gone to see about it——"

"Andrew!" exclaimed Mrs. Medway excitedly. "Tell me all about it. How did that mine happen?"

"Tell her all about it, Andy," said Mrs. Van Koven.

And he tried to do so, but all he knew was but a small part of what they wanted to know, although, with their help, there was more news in that house about the break in Mine No. 3 than any messenger had brought to Inspector Rathburn.

"Glad he's gone to help," thought Car'line, "but I don't see what he can do for 'em. Every now and then there's something awful happening in some of the mines. I wish we didn't have to have any. I hate 'em."

There came a sound of wheels at the gate while Mrs. Medway was trying her best to discover if Andy really knew anything more about what Mr. Rathburn was intending to do for the men who were being drowned. Mrs. Van Koven lingered to hear, and it was Car'line who announced to them:

"It's Michael. He's brought a real handsome carriage. He's hitching his horses."

"Tell him to come right in and help me out," said Mrs. Medway. "Oh, dear, that's General Spruance's landau! I'd rather take any other. Michael——"

"'Dade, ma'am," interrupted Michael from the doorstep, "owld Sprunce is sick abed and he'll niver

know. There's not another wan to be had excepting a milk van. I tuk this from the wagon-shop widout spakin' to a livin' sowl——"

"Help me in, quick, then," she said. "Get me home if you can without anybody thinking I borrowed of him. He and Mr. Medway don't speak."

Even Mrs. Van Koven was disposed to refrain from speaking while the lame lady slowly and carefully made her way out to the roadside.

"It'll not break down, ma'am," said Michael. "I'll have the other mended at wance. How it bruk I don't know, unless it was an accident of some kind."

He felt that the Medway carriage had personally insulted him, however, and he made indignant remarks about it as he all but lifted its injured owner into the Spruance landau.

"Is Caroline ready?" she inquired as soon as she was seated.

That was the first realization, in the mind of Mrs. Van Koven, that Car'line was expected to attend Mrs. Medway all the way to her own house, but she was equal to the occasion.

"Of course!" she exclaimed, hurrying back into

the house. "Car'line? Where are you? Come right along. Mrs. Medway's in the carriage waiting. Come!"

The imperative summons received no answer for a moment. Before the mirror on the shabby old bureau in her own room, next to her mother's, Car'line was tying on her Sunday hat with fingers that trembled so that she could hardly make a bow. "Oh," she said, "I do look so! And to go to her house! I don't know who'll see me. It's dreadful!—I don't care! I wish she hadn't hurt herself at our house."

At Mrs. Medway's first intimation of whom she expected for company Car'line had darted away; but the time to be hoped for was all too short for a general change of apparel. A collar, a pair of cuffs, a handkerchief, her Sunday hat and gloves—but, oh, how small a preparation it all seemed to be for the trial that was before her!

"Why, she's all right," remarked Mrs. Medway, kindly enough, when the flushed and flurried girl came out and Michael held open the carriage door. "I'll send her right back, but I want her to go with me. Sit here, child, not on the front seat. My foot doesn't hurt me a bit."

Away went the landau, and Mrs. Van Koven turned to inquire, although not a soul was near enough to answer her:

"Where's that boy? Andrew? Oh, dear, he hasn't gone home?"

He had not. He had only escaped. Out by the well was an ancient bench whereon many fish had been cleaned since the Liffenkill Valley was settled, and there was Andy. He was working with a zeal which suggested the idea that he would rather clean bullheads any day than be questioned so much by two grown-up women.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE MANSION.

AR'LINE was pressing her lips tightly together to prevent them from saying anything aloud, but Mrs. Medway's fat horses were trotting proudly through the gateway and up the drive, and there was a capital front view to be had of the big stone house.

"Oh, Mrs. Medway, what a splendid place you live in!" was Car'line's first idea.

"It'll be weeks before it's good for anything," said Mrs. Medway aloud, "and I wanted to go right to Washington."

"It's the finest house in the valley," thought Car'line, staring half wistfully at the mansion.

"Oh!" almost snapped Mrs. Medway, reaching down toward her ankle. "I'm so mad that we had to borrow it of old Spruance! But Mr. Medway has beaten him twice, and he'll beat him again, if he tries to go to

Congress. Oh, my! Ugh! He isn't fit to go to Congress! Oh—oom!"

The thoughts and the spoken words did not exactly fit, but Car'line was so sorry for her that she forgot all about the house until after stronger hands than hers had almost carried Mrs. Medway from the borrowed carriage to a wide-armed easy-chair in a small room so elegantly furnished that it made Car'line feel chilly. It was a room away down the central hall, and another door of it that was open gave a glimpse of the great drawing-room. Car'line could see a chandelier, and a vast three-legged piano all shut up. The window-curtains were gorgeous, but she saw too much to think of all of it at once, and she felt bound to look at Mrs. Medway.

"Child!" said the great lady, "either your mother laced it too tight or it's swelling. I'll have such a time with it! But I might have broken my neck. I'm so much obliged to you and your mother."

"Oh, no!" said Car'line. "We're real glad it happened, and I'm so sorry for you I don't know what to do. It's dreadful to be lame."

"Michael's gone for Dr. Nash and a pair of

crutches," said Mrs. Medway. "Soon as he comes back he shall drive you home."

"Oh, I can walk," said Car'line.

"No, you won't walk!" said Mrs. Medway. "It'll be dark, too. I'd keep you here to supper if I hadn't promised your mother. Oom! Don't say a word! There, it's off."

That meant her shoe, and during a full minute more Car'line was free to see all she could from where she sat. She knew that Mr. Medway was very rich. He owned mines of coal and iron, and a furnace, and a rolling mill —he and some other men—but it seemed as if he must have spent all he had to make that house so splendid.

"Coal and iron come up out of the mines all the while," thought Car'line. "I wish father'd found one. Mr. Craik says it's down there somewhere."

"Caroline," said Mrs. Medway suddenly, "is that mine inspector going to be at your house, as soon as he's been to see about those men?"

"Why, Mrs. Medway, I don't know," replied Car'line. "He always boards at our house, but it's only a few days at a time, when he's down inspecting in this division. He belongs to the railroad."

"I don't care for that," said Mrs. Medway. "I know about inspectors. But if he comes back I want you to come right away and tell me all about the men. It's awful! Perhaps I can do something. Everybody ought to do anything they can. I just hate mines for that one thing. Somebody gets hurt every now and then, and they're away down there in the dark drowning and dying, and they can't get out, and—I don't care how my foot hurts—only think of 'em! And their wives, too, and their children!"

In spite of her somewhat pompous ways, therefore, and the habit she had of giving orders, the great lady had a heart, and probably a pretty good one. Car'line was beginning to like her, and her eyes were saying so very plainly indeed. So plainly they said it and so strong grew the look of admiration all over her face, that Mrs. Medway's own face softened into an exceedingly pleasant smile.

"I'll come as soon as I hear anything at all," said Car'line. "But there might be letters for him. They ought to be at our house so he can get them."

"Michael will stop at the post office and get them for you," said Mrs. Medway. "I won't stir again till

I've crutches to go on. 'Twas putting my weight on my foot that hurt it and made it worse."

"Dr. Nash has come, ma'am," said a voice at the door. "He'll be right in."

"Caroline, you may step into the drawing-room," said Mrs. Medway. "Oh, go anywhere you please. See the whole house if you want to.—Doctor, come right in. The axle of my right foot is twisted. The carriage broke its ankle. Oh, dear!"

"I can mend it, I think," came back in a very cheerful, encouraging voice. But Car'line had a tremendous awe of the richest doctor in all the Liffenkill Valley, and she was already in the drawing-room.

"He charges awfully," she thought as she went out of the smaller room. "He made one man pay him a thousand dollars just for almost cutting him to pieces. But the man got well and he looks as good as ever."

Car'line's next impression was one she did not put into shape nor express in words, but she seemed to herself to be thousands of miles away from any room in the old gray house she was born in. She might as well have been in another country, so very different were the household things around her from any to which she

had ever been accustomed. There were no books in the room, for the splendidly bound volumes lying on some of the tables did not count as books. They were costly ornaments for visitors to look at. Nevertheless, in coming into that drawing-room—as large, almost, as all the rooms on the first floor of her own home—Car'line had opened and was beginning to read a new and wonderful book with ever so much teaching in it. Something altogether unexpected had happened to her just in being here. She walked slowly along, around the room, from one thing to another, pausing before paintings on the walls and as long before chairs and sofas of fine-art workmanship and rich materials. The carpet under her feet seemed too fine to be walked on, and the ceiling overhead was frescoed remarkably well, as if it could be worth while to make plaster beautiful instead of merely whitewashing it.

The Van Kovens had never considered themselves poor people, but Car'line stood still and said to herself:

"Why, so it is. We are poor. This is the first time I was ever in such a house. I wonder what's in all the other rooms. I don't half care to see them either. Mother'll want to know when I get back."

Her mother had already begun to "want to know."

Hardly had the Spruance landau and the Medway horses disappeared down the road before Mrs. Van Koven ceased working, unaccountably. She absolutely stood still, leaning on a broom, for half a minute, and then she only gently brushed the floor with the tip edge of the broom as she remarked:

"Car'line's gone with Mrs. Medway."

She brushed a little more and then she said:

"I hope her ankle isn't really sprained—not bad—but I'm glad she thought to put on her Sunday hat."

Mrs. Van Koven was brushing harder now, and she exclaimed, with some vigor:

"I don't care; if Thomas Van Koven had really found the mine he was hunting for I'd be living in as fine a house as Mrs. Medway's. I'd go to Europe and Saratoga, too, and so would Car'line—but neither of us could go to Congress. He's an awful smart man.—I'll go and see what Andy Craik's doing. He's just the brightest boy, but I'm afraid Sarah Craik's a spiling him, and his father doesn't know what work is. He'd never do a stroke unless he had to."

She was at the kitchen door now, and her first view

of Andrew, plying his knife upon the catfish at the bench by the well, seemed to carry her mind back to the dreadful news he had brought, and she said to him:

"Andy, how many of those men did you say were in the mine?"

"Mr. Rathburn said nobody knows yet," replied Andy, cutting off a head. "But they're counting what's left, to find out who's down there. The men on top o' the mine are diggin' in, and the men that are cooped up'll drown if the other men don't get to 'em before the water does."

"Terrible!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven, and she felt so badly that she at once went in and sat down.

All the work in the world could do nothing for the men entrapped in Mine No. 3—all except the pick-and-shovel work of the small gang plying their tools in the narrow "drift" passage.

Everybody in the Liffenkill Valley knew enough about mines to understand the situation, and the sad tidings had spread fast. It was dark, almost, now, and people were talking it over at their supper tables. One after another, in house after house, somebody was sure to remember that when Mine-Inspector Rathburn came

that way he was accustomed to put up at the Van Koven place instead of going to a tavern. He had been seen in the village; he must be at Mrs. Van Koven's now or else he had been there. She would know all about it. And then women put on their hats and things to hurry up to her house and find out, and men said they guessed they would go along, although most likely she wouldn't know a thing. The consequence was that while Mrs. Van Koven's supper table was waiting for Car'-line, after Andy had finished the bullheads and hurried away, there was knock after knock at the front door, but, after knocking, most of the visitors came right in. The grown-up women all asked about Mr. Rathburn and then about the men in the mine, and the first thing all the girls said was:

"Where's Car'line?"

"Car'line?" said Mrs. Van Koven. "She drove home with Mrs. Medway. Her carriage broke down right out there, and she hurt her ankle. Rathburn, he's gone to see how it is. They're not drowned yet, so far as we know. She isn't hurt to speak of, but Car'-line's there, and I do hope she won't let 'em keep her."

So the two exciting accidents went on side by side,

mixed up, twisted and cross-questioned, and all the visitors felt that they were paid for coming. Still, it was an unexpected thing to every girl and woman in the village that Car'line Van Koven should be at Mrs. Medway's.

"I don't exactly say that she's humbly," remarked one good woman, "but she certainly isn't pretty, and she wasn't over and above smart at school. I don't see what a woman like Mrs. Medway, that's traveled all over the world, can see to find in Car'line Van Koven, and she's so young, too."

"That's so, every word of it," said another very good woman.

CHAPTER V.

MINE NUMBER THREE.

ANDY CRAIK was out in the woodshed improving his acquaintance with the dogs. They had already been talked to by Mrs. Craik, and had accepted her as their landlady. They were somewhat accustomed to boarding around, here and there, wherever their master's duties led them, and in every boarding place they had found a woman in charge of the provisions. She was all right, therefore, and they understood perfectly that Andrew was a fellow-boarder and probably a playfellow. He was as good to have as another dog, or better, for they also knew something about boys, but they had resolutely stood out against old Mr. Craik. They would have nothing to do with a man that went on sticks. Nevertheless, he admired them, and he said to Andy:

"You'll have to take the best kind of care of them, and now you can finish your chores, and carry Mr. Rath-

burn's bag upstairs, and bring in the books. I'll want you to fix up a coop for that hen and what's left of her chicks, and you can go to the post office as soon as you've had your supper."

Andy found that the hired man had attended to Mr. Rathburn's baggage. His mother had fed the dogs. The coop would have to wait till to-morrow. The only command to be obeyed at once, therefore, related to supper, and he did all his father could have asked for in reason. There were other small chores to do after supper, and the mail was likely to be neglected by the Craik family, especially as Mrs. Craik quietly remarked:

"Why, husband, I can't guess where any letter's to come from just now. The newspaper won't be there till day after to-morrow."

"Then it'll only have last week's news," growled Mr. Craik, "and we sha'n't know any more about Mine No. 3 than we do now. There isn't much good in newspapers anyhow. They don't print even a railroad smash till it's all over."

Andy, therefore, did not go to the post office, but one of his neighbors did.

. . . . . .

"Missus wants to see you, please!" had absolutely startled Car'line only about a dozen long, long minutes after she floated into the drawing-room and began to drift around among its varied attractions. She floated ashore at last, so to speak, in front of the largest painting in the room. It was very large and very spirited and splendid, for it was a battle scene. She had heard of that picture. All the valley people had heard of it. She knew it was a great battle in the old civil war, and that the tall officer in a new uniform, with gold stars on his shoulders, who was wounded and bleeding and was waving his sword while two men held him up and another threatened to hit him with the American flag, was old General Medway, father of Mrs. Medway's husband.

General Spruance was only in the militia, and that picture helped to beat him at every election. But it was a desperate battle, and if the Confederates did win the victory it was only because General Medway was so badly wounded. Car'line was entirely absorbed in gazing when the house girl touched her arm, and she whirled around all the more quickly.

"Oh," she said, "how long I've been here! I'd

no idea of staying so. Where is Mrs. Medway? Mother'll want to know just how she feels."

Car'line herself felt as if she had been surprised, but she had not really been staying so long. Michael was only just ready to drive her home, Mrs. Medway told her.

"They're going to carry me upstairs like a great baby, Caroline," she said, good-humoredly. "The doctor won't cut my foot off. Tell your mother how much I thank her."

"I will, thank you ever so much," said Car'line, blushing at nothing.

"And as soon as you hear anything from the mine, come right to me with it," continued Mrs. Medway. "I want you to come and see me, anyway."

She said more than that for Car'line to try and remember after she was in the carriage on her way home.

"We're to stop at the post, miss,"said Michael, "and then I'll put ye home. I'm glad it's so dark, indade. Nobody in toon'll see me drivin' owld Gineral Sprunce's own carriage. I can take it back to the shop where they was fixin' it and nobody the wiser but th' b'yes."

It had not been borrowed from its owner at all, and

Michael had not put the Medways under any unpleasant obligation to their political opponent. The fear of discovery, however, made him very prompt at the post office, in spite of the curious questions asked him before the clerk would give him "letters for Mr. Rathburn that's boording at the Van Koven place." The young man inside the mail window was left in a muddle as to whether or not Mr. Rathburn had sprained himself in the accident at Mine No. 3 and had sent Car'line in Mrs. Medway's carriage to get letters that would tell him just how it happened.

Three letters there were, however, and Car'line held them tightly all the way home.

She was genuinely glad to get out of that landau and see it roll away, but, the moment she was in the house, Mrs. Van Koven's hand was out after those letters, even while she was saying:

"Child! How long she kept you! I hope you didn't stay. Did you go into the house?"

"Mother," said Car'line, "it's such a splendid place! Dr. Nash was there."

"Car'line," exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven, "two of these letters are from the railroad company. One of

'em is marked 'Haste!' and we don't know anything. Mr. Rathburn ought to have it right away."

"I'll go and see Mr. Craik," said Car'line.

"And have him send Andy," added her mother. "He could go first thing to-morrow morning. Eat your supper as quick as you can!"

Car'line did so, but it was curious how little she could tell her mother about the inside of the Medway house. She had seen it, to be sure, part of it, but it had been too much for her, and she was glad to get away at last with Mr. Rathburn's letters.

It was a little bewildering even to have those letters, but the first person she met at the Craik place was Andrew, for Car'line went around to the kitchen door and caught him with his arms full of wood.

"Andy," she exclaimed, "you've got to go all the way to Mine No. 3 first thing to-morrow morning. You must carry him his letters. One of 'em says 'Haste!' on it."

"That's about the accident," replied Andy. "I'll go right away. Come in and see mother. It's only seven miles."

That was true if one could go in a bee-line, but by

any track that could be traveled it was a good deal farther.

Down went the wood into the box by the kitchen stove, and out came—but not from the box—the story of Mrs. Medway's foot, the broken axle, and Mr. Rathburn's letters.

"Andrew," said his father sternly, rapping upon the floor with both his canes, for he was sitting down, "don't you wait an hour—not an hour. If the railway company said 'Haste!' it was because they meant it. We don't know what's happened, or may be about to happen."

"Wear your overcoat, Andrew," came quietly but firmly from his mother. "I'll give you a couple of dollars. You may need a little money if anything should happen. Put on your mittens. It'll be a cold night."

"I'll go along the railway," said Andy, "to the offshoot that goes to the mines. You could find your way in the dark, and there's loads o' moonshine."

Mr. Craik was a fountain of careful instructions concerning the ins and outs of the path to Mine No. 3, but he turned for a moment to tell Car'line something

about old General Medway and the great battle. When he turned from her again he asked:

"Mother, where's Andrew?"

"Andy?" exclaimed Mrs. Craik. "Why, he's gone with Mr. Rathburn's letters. He wanted to take the dogs, but I wouldn't let him—not one of 'em."

"Of course not. Gone, is he? I wanted to tell him something.—Well!"

He could not think of anything more for a moment, and he peered out of the nearest window as if Andy might still be within sight. Then he looked away and said, inquiringly:

"Car'line?"

"Why, husband," remarked his wife, "she isn't here. She's gone home."

A number of rods away, on the road up the valley, a somewhat excited boy was proving himself a very good walker. He could not expect to keep up that pace for seven straight miles, let alone angles and turns, but it carried him rapidly away from home, to begin with.

If it had not tried to follow the course of Liffenkill Creek, that road would have been a great deal straighter and shorter. As it was, it made over two miles of the

distance between the ancient village of Salterville and the bridge which carried the railway track and nothing else but a narrow plank footway over the creek at a height of twenty feet and more above the surface of the water. The bridge had two sections, resting upon a stone pier in the middle, and Andy had more than once remarked of that pier that it had a slim, lean look, considering how heavy some of the trains must be.

He was not thinking of that just now. It was really pretty late in the evening when he stood in the middle of the bridge leaning against the handrail and looking down upon the glancing, rippling, rushing Liffenkill.

"'Tisn't much now," he said aloud, "but it can raise the biggest kind of freshet when the snow melts in the mountains. If all the snow should melt at once, wouldn't there be a flood? I guess there would. I ain't tired a bit, but it's an awful long walk from here to Mine No. 3. I'll come back by the other road through the village."

Three miles along the railroad and about two more along a branch track that led to the mine, if he had already walked them, would have brought him to a scene that was weird and wonderful.

The moon was shining brightly enough, but seemed to be looking down into a deep gorge of the mountain to see what so many men and women were doing there at that time of the night. Most of them were gathered upon a broad level, half way up the gorge, in front of a wide opening in the face of a crag. This was the mouth of Mine No. 3. Out of it came no tongue, but a narrow tramway, and it seemed as if loud voices came traveling into the outer air along those flat, grooved rails. There were several large buildings upon the level. Around and beyond these, at irregular distances, wherever a good building spot could be found, were larger and smaller dwellings—the homes and boarding houses of the miners and of the officers in charge of the mine. They made something like streets on either side of the gorge and of the railroad in the middle of it.

Just now there was other light than that of the moon or of the gas lamps here and there, for several bonfires had been built, and around these were men and women who stared into the fire and at each other, and then moaned and shivered, while children clung to them and asked piteously plaintive questions. One woman walked away alone and seemed to be trying to walk

right up the mountain, and all the while she was calling somebody by name. It was a man's name, and from what she said, the man must be away inside of the mountain.

Somebody on the level asked of a man who came out of the opening with a lantern in his hand:

"Can they hear him?"

"Rathburn? Aye, man, he's away in, by the pump engine. The roof o' the drift fell in after he got by. He's as bad off as the rest."

"What did he say?" asked another.

"That's what we can't make out. The boys are workin' for dear life, but it's a poor chance, for the water was rising fast long since."

"They're all gone then, and the inspector's gone with 'em, poor man!"

Wail after wail responded to the dark tidings that passed from lip to lip, and away in yonder, out of sight, the workmen worked on and the night grew darker, with clouds over the moon, until nearly midnight.

"Letters for Mr. Rathburn?" asked a well-dressed man of a boy who had just been brought to him. "He'll never read them. The men'll tell you how it is."

"I'm Andy Craik," was the very much excited reply. "His baggage and his dogs are at our house, but he boards at Mrs. Van Koven's. The letters came there."

The superintendent of the mine—for he was the man Andy spoke to—took out a memorandum book and wrote, methodically, the names given him.

"I shall know where to find his effects for his people," he said. "Sorry for him. Best kind of fellow. Risked his life for the men."

He turned away without asking for the letters, and Andy was not unwilling to go to the mouth of the mine and learn about the accident.

The miners were feverishly eager to tell him, for he came to see Rathburn.

"Come on in, boy," said one of them. "I'll show you. Put a light on your cap. It's one o' the new lights and they're good. All the men like 'em."

Strange that at such a time he could talk about a new patent hat-light for miners to wear at their work; but Andy felt more at home in the mine after he put one on and saw how bright a light it could throw for a number of feet before him.

"It's down to the lower drift," said the miner when they had walked some distance and came to a yawning pit where the tramway was cut off. "You'll have to go down the ladder, for the lift's not working."

"Lift" was the mine name for what other people call an elevator, and Andy already knew a great deal about mines. He had hardly glanced down the gloomy galleries which had opened right and left as he and his guide went along. They were of no account now except for the piers of coal and rock left to hold up the mountain-side above them while the mine itself had been excavated farther in. A great deal of coal had come out of those old drifts and galleries, but then the stratum of coal had come to a "fault," where it seemed to cease, and it had been necessary to sink a shaft and go down a number of feet to hit the coal again and follow it on with a new "drift." The names and terms used in different mining regions differ somewhat, but they are nearly enough alike for one miner to understand just what another means.

The miner went over the edge of the pit and down the ladder, and Andy followed him, but it was a dreadfully pokerish thing to do, with an idea to carry that

things were going wrong in the mine and that nobody could guess what was going to happen next.

"I don't care!" thought Andy. "If they can hear him, I can get to him and give him his letters. I will, too. Maybe I can do something.—There, I can hear them picking!"

His feet were on the floor of the lower drift, and he could see light along a gallery and hear voices and pickaxe work, but he knew that there was yet another, lower level, and the real terror and danger had begun away down there.

CHAPTER VI.

TELL ME THEY'RE LIVING!

"MOTHER," said Car'line, going into the sitting-room of her own house without any appearance of being in a hurry, "Andy has gone to Mine No. 3 with those letters for Mr. Rathburn."

"Car'line!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven, "why didn't you come home and tell me at once? Why, he won't get there. He ought not to have gone at night."

"He has gone," said Car'line, and there were signs that she would have been willing not to say any more.

That was not at all the feeling of Mrs. Van Koven, for she at once remarked:

"Too many things have happened to-day, Car'line. I don't know what's a coming to us. I've always seen it so. As soon as things begin to happen, why, they

keep right on and nothing you can say or do'll stop 'em. First, it was the mine, and we don't know a thing."

"We will when Andy gets back," said Car'line. "He won't stay there."

"Then there was Mrs. Medway, and now there's these letters and there was 'Haste!' about 'em. What did you do at Mrs. Medway's? Did anybody in the village see you in her carriage? There were lots of people here, but they all hurried home to tell, and I'm glad they went for it's time we were all in bed. Go right on about the Medway place."

Car'line was compelled to try and remember all she could, but it was a great deal like being asked to recall something she had dreamed and that had half gotten away from her. That is the meanest thing there is about even the best dreams that come, and Car'line felt as if it was still hanging around in her mind, somehow, like pictures on the walls, after her mother stopped sewing and told her to go upstairs. No sooner was she in her own room, however, than she stood still.

Oh, how homely the room looked! There was no paper on the walls; only plain whitewash. The thin muslin curtains were hardly any hindrance to the moon

shining in. There were no outside blinds. The only trace of carpet was a faded, fringy slip lying in front of the bed.

"We don't own any mines," thought Car'line. "Mrs. Medway didn't make her mines. They just came. Things happen to some people and they don't happen to others. I wish that great hole that father dug up the hill had gone down to coal."

Car'line was not so much thinking as feeling. People must feel before they can think, but merely making calculations with figures and the like is not thinking. Machines can do it as well as any man can, and just now Car'line was making calculations. Then they all drifted away, for she could not guess how much money had been pulled up out of coal and iron shafts to be spent on Mrs. Medway's luxuries.

It was after the figures beat her that Car'line got as far as real thinking, and her thoughts were all right, for they turned away from herself and her poverty and followed Andy Craik all the way to Mine No. 3. There she had to stop, for she could follow him no farther, not even after she lay in bed and tried to make pictures of men in a mine away down. She shut her eyes and

stopped trying as soon as it came back to her that they might all be drowning there.

"Andy Craik knows by this time," she thought. But Andy did not know.

He stood, with several miners, who were all panting, perspiring, grimy, in front of a mass of rock—slaty fragments of limestone rock—which had fallen down from the roof of the drift and now barred the way.

Andy's eyes were searching eagerly among the rock fragments, and now he exclaimed to the miner who had brought him down there:

"I can hear him. It's Mr. Rathburn. There's room enough on top for me to get over. I'm thinner'n you are. I can come back and tell you how it is."

"Just what we want!" shouted the foreman of the gang of miners. "I'd give the world to know. Try it, lad! Get over and come back quick! It may be life or death. Courage, now, lad! It's an awful thing to do!"

Andy sprang forward promptly enough. It seemed to him not at all awful; but he did not know all that the miners did, nor that at any moment more of the treacherous roof above might come down on them or on him—most likely on him, under the broken place.

"Here I am. I can't move."

The moment he began to clamber over the broken mass it seemed even less difficult, for he found a kind of irregular burrow, quite large enough for him to go along without squeezing. His lamp in his cap-front threw a good light ahead of him, and he did not at all mind the dirt he crawled over or the chilling water that trickled down upon him. Still, it was dreadfully cold, disagreeable, pokerish work, and he was glad enough when his burrow began to widen downward, and he could see the long, bewildering gallery ahead of him. It grew broader, too, right there, and he saw what seemed to be machinery, and a large lantern—two of them—and then he heard a groan, and a voice that he knew called out:

"Here I am. I can't move. Hand me the solder. I'd put the pump-engine in order, and the pipe's nearly mended. Soon as it'll suck, start the engine and the pump, and if they've the outer pipes a' right they can work the force-pump. We can keep the mine clear, perhaps, till we can get out the men."

"Oh, Mr. Rathburn," asked Andy, hurrying forward to where his friend lay, evidently in great pain, at the side of the gallery, "are you hurt?"

"Andrew?" exclaimed Rathburn. "Why, how came you here?"

"Letters for you, sir," said Andy. "Two from the railroad, marked 'Haste!' and I brought 'em. But I wasn't too large to crawl through the hole."

"Thank God!" said Rathburn as Andy handed him the stick of solder that he had pointed at. "I can finish this now, but I can't get up. Do you know anything about an engine?"

Andy did not know much, but quite enough to obey Rathburn's instructions. The moment the leak in the pipe was declared finished, therefore, the drift pumping-engine was set at work.

"Go, now, quick!" said Rathburn. "Keep those letters. Take these things. Take them all to my mother. Give her my love and tell her I died to save the men in the lower drift."

"They're going to dig you out!" exclaimed Andy. "I'll tell her, but you won't be dead."

"Go! Quick!" gasped Rathburn, and Andy was in the burrow without a second of delay.

Rathburn turned over to watch the engine, groaning a little but appearing to be listening.

"She's working well," he said. "I don't know how badly I'm hurt, but I'm glad I've held out. She pumps! —There! I heard 'em! Some of 'em are living!"

Something like a far-away echo came along the gallery. It was very faint, but as it reached the "jog" in the gallery, where the engine was now pumping, it grew clearer and it seemed to say, after Rathburn:

"Living yet! Pump! Pump!"

"Oh, that the men knew outside! Oh, God, that Andy may get through!" said Rathburn.

Andy crawled fast, bruising his hands and knees recklessly. It seemed to him that the burrow was smaller, for it squeezed him in several places that he had passed easily in coming.

He was more than half way when he heard something. It made him quiver from head to foot, for it was a voice, away down among the rock fragments under him. What it said he could not understand. Only the words "Mein Gott!" and he knew the speaker was a German.

"He was in the gallery when the roof fell," thought Andy. "Nearly all of the miners come from Europe, but some are Americans, some are Huns, and some are

Polanders. Perhaps we can dig him out if he isn't broken to pieces. Rathburn's awfully hurt."

"Oh, men! I'm afraid the b'ye's gane too. He was a brave b'ye!"

Andy heard that only a few feet in front of him, and it made him struggle forward yet more desperately. He heard a kind of dull crash behind him. His heart beat almost to bursting. Then it seemed to stand still. He gave a plunge and went rolling out into the forward gallery, while behind him the tumbling shale closed up his burrow. Ten seconds later and he would have been crushed instantly.

"Pump!" he shouted. "The pipe's mended! The engine's going. Rathburn's hurt, but he's alive and he says 'Pump!'"

"Hurrah!" came back hoarsely from the grimy miners, but Andy did not hear it. The pressure and the foul air in the burrow had been too much for him, and he had fainted away. When he came to himself he answered a number of questions, but the men were feverishly at work. The flat cars on the tramway were carrying out the rubbish rapidly, while, as fast as space could be cleared for it, the roof was "shored up" with

planks and timbers. Andy was carried to the lift and up on one of the cars. He learned that the roof had begun to fall before Rathburn went in, and that he had dashed through to the engine because that was the only hope for fighting the flood on the lower levels of the mine.

"He must be badly bruk!" said one of the men at the mine-mouth. And Andy knew that his tidings were going around in several tongues. They talked loudly, rapidly, and men and women pointed at him where he stood, but he was not noticing them. He did not know that he had done anything remarkable, and he still felt pretty badly, in spite of the fresh air. He was thinking of Rathburn and of the poor German under the rocks.

"Boy? Boy?" It was the woman who had climbed the mountain side calling, and she had come back again when she heard somebody hurrah. "Oh, can ye tell me, is my man living? Tell me no that he's dead! Oh, he's not! He's not! I canna' have him dead!"

"I don't believe he is," said Andy. "I left the men digging through, but it's the pumping—Mr. Rathburn mended the broken pipe—that's what'll save them."

"Boy, tell me he's living! I want to hear ye say it again. Say 'living!'"

"Be quiet, lass," said a white-haired woman standing by her. "What does he know more than he's told? They'd all ha' drooned but for him. God bless him! Laddie, ye may tell your ain mither I've twa boys doon there, and if I see 'em again I bless her for her ain lad. Aye, and they're baith married men wi' families o' their ain."

Gradually Andy began to understand the matter. The pipes being broken, the pumps refused to work, and the greater outside engine had been standing idle, helpless against the flooding of the mine. Rathburn's daring dash had enabled him to make repairs, but it was all in vain until Andy brought the news of it to the men outside and the great pump engine was started. Then the danger became less and less that the men would be drowned before they could be reached, but it was not entirely removed. Neither could anybody more than guess how many were yet alive, and there had been more than forty men at work beyond the break in the eastern gallery of the lower drift. The younger Scotch woman's husband had been foreman of that gang.

The long night grew darker on the outer earth, but Andy could not be induced to leave the watch he was keeping with the others at the mouth of the mine.

Children had all been led away long since, and many women went with them, but others lingered, walking around the fires or sitting on the rocks, not quite so hopelessly now. Some of them now and then covered their heads with their shawls and rocked to and fro.

Far inside and down, down, where Mr. Rathburn lay, there was no longer any light except the dull red glare that came from the open ash-door under the fire-box of the engine. This machine was compact rather than small, and it worked away, all alone, as if it had a mind and a will and was pumping to save those men.

Every now and then a kind of dark shadow on the rocky floor would lift its head and listen, for the echo-like voices which came down the long corridor eastward had a sound of despair in them.

"They've a chance yet," murmured the shadow, "but I feel as if I were dying. I'm so glad Andy came."

Rathburn was evidently in pain, but he was bearing it well. After a while he suddenly raised his head again and listened in the other direction.

"Coming? The boys are coming!" he exclaimed huskily. "I can hear the picks! The engine works well, but it needs coal. It's burning low. What's that? Heinrich? Wasn't he crushed?"

The diggers shouted loudly, for it was the German's voice and some of them could understand him. What he said was faint enough, but it meant:

"Don't hit me with a pick. I'm between two rocks. Maybe I'm alive, but I don't know. Come quick or I can't hold out."

It is a thing that often happens, if a man is watching and if he dodges quickly, that a rock that would have crushed him if it had hit him becomes a very good protection to him when he is knocked down alongside of it.

The men toiled desperately and the beams and shore-planks went up fast. Out they dragged Heinrich, but he was now insensible and could tell them no more until he could be revived in the outer air.

"On, now!" shouted the foreman. "We must get

to the engine! Rathburn is there, dead or alive. Work!"

Work they did, their headlights glittering like stars and their strong hearts beating high with hope for their fellow-workmen.

CHAPTER VII.

RATHBURN AT MRS. VAN KOVEN'S.

THERE was a dense fog in the gorge before the mouth of Mine No. 3 that morning. It seemed to grow denser as the sun arose over the mountains, and it struggled for a while in wreaths and rolls of cold vapor, until the yellow rays broke through and came to see what was going on about the mine mouth.

A flat car came out along the tramway and there were four persons on the car. Three were sitting up and one was lying down.

"We've got him," called out Andy Craik to the men who came crowding forward. "The doctor says he's going to live. He wants a spring wagon with a bed in it to take him right to Mrs. Van Koven's house."

"Aye, aye, sir!" responded several at once. "They'll be ready! God bless him!"

They all knew that the man lying flat was Mr. Rath-

burn. Andy Craik had tired of waiting outside, and during a whole hour he had been away in at the mouth of the pit. Many cars loaded with rubbish had been hoisted and sent out, and at last this car had come up with the surgeon and the superintendent and the injured inspector.

"Rib broken," said the surgeon in reply to eager inquiries. "Leg slightly fractured. Bad bruises on the head. He mustn't stay here. There will be too many other cases. Some of 'em worse than his, I'm afraid."

"But the men!" screamed a woman's voice. "Ha' ye heard frae the men i' the far drift?"

"Aye, lass," responded a miner. "We can hear then a' the while. The flood's rising slow noo. The diggers are a'most through the break. They'd ha' been gane lang syne but for Rathburn and that b'ye Andy."

Something like a shower of blessings fell all around Andy, and even more were sent after the bruised inspector as he was gently lifted from the car and borne away in the arms of strong men. Oh, how tenderly they carried him!

The spring-wagon called for was right at hand and a mattress was in it in a twinkling. Mr. Rathburn was

hoisted over the side and laid upon the mattress like a wounded soldier carried away from a battlefield in an ambulance. He groaned a little, and then he drew a long sigh of relief, for the mattress was softer than the rocky floor of the drift had been.

"Andy," he said, "what did they say about the men and the flood?—What is that?"

He lifted his head as well as he could, for at that moment a great cry arose at the mine mouth. It was not a hurrah exactly, but an outburst. The women's voices in it made it sound like a scream of joy. Then the superintendent sprang upon a car and shouted so that he could have been heard far down the gorge:

"The workers ha' reached the men! We've saved them all!"

The granite faces of the cliffs and ledges caught it up, all they could repeat of it, and sent it on from one to another till it died away:

"All—all—all—ah—ah—ah," for even the echoes of the Broken Ridge Mountains were glad that not one man would be missing when the women and the children should gather at the mine mouth to see the men brought up carload after carload.

It was true that every man of them was either more or less battered or almost sinking with exhaustion. At the last they had been in water up to their waists, huddled together and holding each other up. As the surgeon had said, he would have many cases on his hands and it was well that Rathburn should be taken to a more comfortable place, where he could have better care.

"I wish he were coming to our house," remarked Andy, "but he belongs at Mrs. Van Koven's. I can take care of his dogs."

"Go to bed soon as you get home," replied the surgeon. "I guess your mother'll attend to that. One of our men will stay with Rathburn."

"Glad I haven't got to walk home. Good-bye, sir," said Andy, and he added, "Oh, but ain't I glad we saved the men!"

There had been only one person in the Van Koven house during all the early part of that crisp winter morning. Mrs. Van Koven herself had not been downstairs before Car'line, and she felt that something like injustice had been done her. At such a time as that she might have been allowed to get a lot of work done before anybody else was stirring.

"Car'line!" she exclaimed when they came in from milking the cows and feeding the pigs and poultry, particularly the geese, "I can't stand this sort of thing! Why don't you hurry and eat your breakfast and get on your things and run up to Mrs. Craik's and see if they've heard from the mine?"

"Andy can't be back so soon."

"Car'line! I don't care if he isn't! I want to know, even if he hasn't come. It's dreadful to think of those men, and we can't do a thing! I couldn't sleep a wink."

Car'line never said much by way of answer to her mother, and that was one of the things that sometimes made her seem almost too quiet. It was so hard to think of exactly what to say, and even now there was really almost nothing at all that could be said.

"I'll do the work," said Mrs. Van Koven as Car'line arose from the breakfast table. "Just you go to Craik's. Somebody may have been there."

Car'line was out of the house before a great deal more could be said, but, after all, she did not go up the road with any appearance of being in a hurry.

"I'm glad there isn't anything more to do at our

house," she said as she walked along. "The work's all done. I don't want to do anything. I never felt so in all my life. I wouldn't like to be rich if the men that dug the coal for me have got to be drowned."

That was something to think of, and it lasted her until, just as she was going in at the Craik gate, she was startled by a loud outbreak of barking somewhere behind the house.

"Mr. Rathburn's dogs!" she exclaimed. "They know somebody's come. I'll go around and take a look at them."

There they were, both old Mr. Craik and his wife, in the woodshed paying all sorts of attention to the two setters.

"Oh, Mrs. Craik!" exclaimed Car'line. "I know Andy isn't here——"

"Of course he isn't," interrupted Mrs. Craik, "but I know just how you feel. I'd give a'most anything to hear from that there mine. So would all the valley. Never anything stirred me up so."

"You see, Car'line," said Mr. Craik, "it's right close by, and you don't know if they're actilly drowned yet. It gives me a kind o' chokin' feeling to think of

men standing still while the water rises to stop their breathing——"

"Husband, stop!" exclaimed his wife. "I don't want to hear any more. You've been just tormenting me, telling about horrible things, ever since the news came."

"Woof! woof!" shouted the dogs, for they had been surveying Car'line and had made up their minds about her. It was time now for them to speak to her kindly, for they had barked with great severity, as watchdogs, when they heard her at the gate. They had not yet quite assented to the goodness of Mr. Craik. Too much of him was sticks, in their opinions, but they were disposed even to wrestle with each other and with their chains for the friendly words and pats Car'line was eager to give them.

"They know ye," said Mr. Craik. "But it spiles a dog for a watchdog to let him be too familiar. A real good watchdog ought not to be fed oftener'n once a week."

"Then if I was a thief," said Car'line, "I'd come and feed him and he'd let me in. Mr. Rathburn'd want you to feed his dogs."

"Why, child!" exclaimed Mrs. Craik. "They wont eat another thing. They can't! Mr. Craik and I—why, we've been out here again and again to see if they wanted anything."

"I was going to bring 'em something," said Car'line, but before she could be answered a deep voice at the corner of the house demanded:

"What's the news from the mine?" And another added,

"Where's Andy?" But Mr. Craik replied,

"You'll have to wait. He said he'd be home first thing, but I reckon he's holdin' on to see the bodies fetched up or something. There wasn't any hope for 'em, I s'pose."

"How many were employed there? Do you know?"

"Ordinarily, not more'n two hundred," said Mr. Craik, "but there may have been more just now. Most likely they were all down there. Any of your folks among 'em?"

"No," said the deep-voiced visitor, "but some of 'em had friends in the village. They'll be awful sorry."

"Why, Mr. Craik," said Car'line, "you don't know

anything about it. It isn't time for 'em to feel bad yet. I thought about that last night."

"I'm glad you had some sense," exclaimed Mrs. Craik. "I didn't. I just sat down and cried, like an old fool. I'll wait till Andy comes home before I cry again."

"You'll have enough to make a fuss about, then," said her husband encouragingly. "I'd like to know how many of the men were mashed to pieces when the mine fell in. Flattened right out, some of 'em——"

"Stop!" screamed Mrs. Craik. "You are just dreadful! Why doesn't Andy come?"

"There's somebody coming," said Car'line, looking away down the road toward the village.

"I declare!" exclaimed Mr. Craik. "Hoss and wagon and a reg'lar crowd. Let's go out and see what it is."

"They've stopped at our house! I'm going——"

"So am I!" said Mrs. Craik, and so said they all, and the dogs joined in a kind of chorus that meant "so would I if I could break loose."

Not very many minutes before that Mrs. Van Koven stood in the doorway of her house remarking:

"Why doesn't Car'line hurry home? She's always gone so long. What if Andy got home and she's a-staying to talk? Oh, dear! But she'll learn all he can tell. It's just as I always said—as soon as one thing happens another comes right along. I wonder how Mrs. Medway's foot is. I'd like to know if the people in the village have heard anything. Somebody's coming."

She was right about that. No sooner had some of her more intimate friends finished their breakfasts and a few other small household matters than they determined to "run up to Mrs. Van Koven's and see if she knows anything."

They meant anything new about the mine or Mrs. Medway's ankle, and they came in haste, without stopping to explain to anybody else or to fix up. So they came in a long string, for nearly all the village people considered themselves friends of Mrs. Van Koven if she had anything worth while to tell.

One after another, in rapid succession, as they reached her gate and began to ask questions and went on up to the door where she stood, they were dreadfully disappointed; but they passed on into the house all the

same to look around them and say to those who had arrived before them:

"What? You here? I just came to see if Mrs. Van Koven knew anything more about the mine."

It was almost provoking, as if they had been deceived into coming; but while they were all telling each other over again what little they already knew, Mrs. Van Koven, out at the gate now and looking down the road, suddenly exclaimed:

"Oh, that wagon! That's Andy Craik! Just look at the people!"

The wagon from the mine had indeed made its appearance. The moment it had been seen crossing the bridge over the Liffenkill below the dam, the blacksmith shop first, and then the drug-store and the post office, had been left as empty as old eggshells.

On it came, and the next thing Andy Craik stood up in it for a moment to shout:

"They saved 'em all!" But he had to sit down again at once, for he felt giddy, and the driver and the miner who sat on the front seat with him had to tell the rest of the news and about Mr. Rathburn.

"Drive kerful!" shouted the post master, and some

of the rest ran ahead to pick stones out of the way, so the wheels of the wagon shouldn't strike them to jar Mr. Rathburn.

"It'd hurt him awful to joggle him," said the tavern keeper. "The mine fell in on him. Guess you wouldn't want to be joggled if 'twas you."

"Guess I wouldn't," said three or four who heard him. But the most of the stones along those ruts were picked out by young fellows that knew Andy.

Through the village and on up the road came the procession that formed as the tidings spread, and the men and boys explained it to each other and to the women and girls on the sidewalks and at the doors and windows. The fact that nobody had been entirely killed or drowned was offset by the other fact that so many had been badly hurt, including the inspector, and that the mine was so badly flooded, with a prospect of an explosion of "fire-damp," if there should be any there. It was the opinion of most of the village boys that the mine and everybody in it owed his life to Andy Craik, but they could not yet explain how, except that he had "crawled in and set it a-going again, so as to save the pumps."

They were vague but enthusiastic, and so was Car'line when she came running down the road, followed by the men who had been at Craik's, and then by him and his wife. All the while there was a tremendous barking and howling from the woodshed, as if Bob and Jim had understood who was hurt. Car'line reached her own gate just while men were lifting the mattress, with Mr. Rathburn on it, right out of the wagon.

"'Twon't hurt him, Car'line," called out Andy. "He hasn't said a word. But he mustn't be talked to by anybody."

That was a severe prohibition and was so considered by all of them, but Car'line had not heard the news at all and she responded to Andy:

"Did you find him in the mine? How did he happen to tumble in?"

Andy could not reply at that moment, but some village girls came running past the wagon to tell her all they knew. Some boys helped them, and by the time the inspector on his mattress had been carried upstairs, Car'line had heard a great deal. At all events, Mine No. 3 seemed to her to have penetrated pretty nearly

to the other side of the Broken Ridge Mountains, and away in there, in the dark, Andy Craik had saved Rathburn after the inspector himself had saved the rest of the men.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WONDERFUL TRUNK.

ANDY CRAIK was hurried home by his mother, to be put to bed much against his will. Mr. Craik had been but a little behind the rest in reaching the Van Koven place, but, after he got there, Car'line lost any inclination to linger among the news tellers, for he had so many grisly things to relate.

Her mother had a grievance of her own. The three village doctors had come, and for once they were all agreed. The surgeon at the mine had sent for them to come and help him, but first they were to care for Mr. Rathburn, and he must not be taken from the mattress. On no account, the surgeon said, was he to be put upon a feather bed, and the village doctors approved. If that was not an insult to Mrs. Van Koven it was to her geese, and she felt it.

"I s'pose some o' those fellows may get up again," said Mr. Craik; "but when once things get to going

wrong at a mine, why, it's never a safe place afterward. There are mines under all this country, if you could find just where they are. If they should all be found and worked, the whole country'd cave in some day."

He said it very cheerfully, for he had not himself found any mine and was not to be held responsible for the supposable disaster.

"Car'line?" called out her mother, down the stairway, in the loud-whispery kind of voice that can be heard all over a house. "Car'line, come up here!"

"She's gone aout, Mrs. Van Koven," very promptly responded one of Andy's boy friends. "I don't know what they did, but it was somethin', for Car'line, she said she was going to go right away and tell Mrs. Medway."

"Oh," said Mrs. Van Koven, "that's right. She promised to bring Mrs. Medway the news when it came."

"Mrs. Medway?" said one of the doctors. "Dr. Nash attends her. It's a matter of no consequence. A mere sprain."

"Hardly requiring surgery," smiled another doctor. But one of Andy's young friends broke in with:

"My father says he wouldn't trust him for a hoss, not if the critter was wuth anything; but I'm going up to Andy's house to see those dogs. Come on, boys. They're setters. If Andy goes out a-shooting he'll take 'em along."

Car'line had indeed escaped, very quietly, and she was now well on her way to Mrs. Medway's house. Her remaining tribulation was the necessity she was under of going through the village.

It was something like running the gauntlet, for even the cobbler saw Car'line go by and unstrapped his last to come out and limp after her, shouting:

"Car'line, hold on a moment. I want to ask ye! Haow many was killed? Und haow many draowned?"

She got away from him and the rest of the population of Salterville all the more easily because the miners had all been rescued, but there was pretty general indignation over her refusal to stay and tell just how badly they were hurt and how long they had really kept alive under water.

After that she felt more and more uncertain as to what was coming next. She was even glad that the distance to be walked was not any shorter, and she felt

queer indeed when she went across the broad piazza of the Medway place and rang the door-bell.

In a half-minute then she was in the hall, with another side-glimpse of the great drawing-room, but the door-boy led her at once up the stairs. These were as unlike as they could be to the steep, high-stepping, uncarpeted stairs in her own house. A curious thought came to her that if Mrs. Medway had young children and if one of them should roll down those stairs that had carpets like cushions, the child might squall—he probably would—but he wouldn't be hurt to speak of.

Mrs. Medway was in an upstairs parlor adjoining her sleeping-room. She did not get up when Car'line was brought in, but she spoke as if she were in a great hurry:

"Come here, dear! Tell me all about it. Oh, I'm so glad you came! My foot's getting so swelled and I have to keep so still. I was looking over things in my trunk. Sit down."

"Mr. Rathburn's at our house," said Car'line bluntly. "They got all of the men out, but they were hurt."

"Now, child, you are almost out of breath," said Mrs. Medway. "Sit still a moment. Begin at the be-

ginning. One of my men saw the wagon drive into the village."

"Mr. Rathburn was in it, and so was Andy Craik," began Car'line, and from that starting place it was easy to go back and arrange the story so it would fit. She told it pretty well, too, and she tried to deal fairly with the two heroes, but the glory of saving those miners seemed to teeter back and forth a great deal between Andy and Mr. Rathburn. On the whole, the hero that was hurt the worst got the larger share of praise in the end.

"So brave!" exclaimed Mrs. Medway. "My husband's father, old General Medway, he was wounded three times. He was in twenty-seven battles——"

"But he never crawled through such a hole as Andy Craik did," suggested Car'line. "I'd rather go to war."

"So would I!" exclaimed Mrs. Medway, shuddering. "Dark, and wet, and cold, and the mine caving in all around him. Andy's a plucky fellow. So is Mr. Rathburn. I'll send a wagonload of things to those men right away.—Oh, my foot!"

"Oh, what dresses!" jumped unexpectedly from the lips of Car'line, for her eyes had been busy with

the trunk and with the part of its contents that had been taken out and scattered around. "And what a big trunk!"

"So it is, child. Big as a house. It's water-tight, too. It could float around all day and no water could get in. That trunk went all over Europe with me, and once it was in Egypt. That was when I saw the Nile and the Pyramids."

"Oh, Mrs. Medway," exclaimed Car'line, but there was no other remark that seemed proper to be made, and Mrs. Medway said:

"I had it pulled out here just to amuse myself. Some people get rid of their old dresses, but I don't. I keep them to remember things by. That's the dress I wore at the Prince of Wales's ball, when I danced with the Duke of Argyle. I couldn't dance much if there was to be a grand affair to-night."

She took out another fine robe as she spoke. It was of brilliant white satin and it was trimmed with much lace.

"Oh!" exclaimed Car'line. "And how long it is! It would go half-way across the room."

"Pretty nearly," laughed Mrs. Medway. "It's one

of my younger dresses. But I wore it in Europe. Long trains were the court style."

"Yes, ma'am," said Car'line, but she sat back in her chair a little and stared at the dresses, while their owner gave their several histories. It was just as if something more had happened, as her mother had said it would, for here was Car'line traveling all over Europe with Mrs. Medway. She was visiting palaces, and queens, and empresses, and emperors, and kings, and pyramids, and mountains. There were smaller mementoes as well, with each a story of its own.

Mrs. Medway would not willingly have missed having Car'line there to talk to and to help her forget about her foot, but all the while they were getting better acquainted and Car'line was looking out into the great world.

All that was left of the forenoon flitted by until at last the clock on the mantel chimed in a way that brought Car'line to her feet.

"Mrs. Medway!" she exclaimed. "It's time for me to go home. I've been here ever so long."

"Have you?" said Mrs. Medway. "Well, I shall wish you to come again. Now, dear, put on that hat

and go and get that long, spiked stick in the corner. Now look in the glass."

It was a tremendously long, iron-tipped stick. The hat, with its loop and feather, was pretty enough. It had a jaunty look upon Car'line's head, but she glanced into the mirror and asked:

"What is it?"

"It's an alpenstock and a Tyrolese hat," said Mrs. Medway. "Now you are ready to climb the Alps."

"Did you climb them?" asked Car'line.

"Not a bit of it," laughed Mrs. Medway. "I bought the hat and stick and let the others do the climbing. The Alps were too high for me."

"I'd climb 'em if I was there!" exclaimed Car'line. "I'd go up Mount Blanc—I'd go anywhere."

"Maybe you would," said her new friend, looking at her thoughtfully. "But I'll tell you what you may do now. You may take those little handkerchiefs home with you. Tell your mother I'm coming to see if I can do anything for that inspector. I want to see Andy, too."

"Oh, thank you!" said Car'line, reddening and then turning pale. "They are beautiful, but——"

She hesitated, but Mrs. Medway was imperative. She was used to giving orders and being obeyed.

"Take them right along!" she said. "I'm going to see your mother about you. You can go now, but Michael is to drive you home in the carryall. I'm so glad you came. Soon as you have anything more to tell, you must come again. Don't you disappoint me."

"I—I'll come," said Car'line, but she got out of the house and into the carryall in a confused state of mind, with her little packet of handkerchiefs and the pretty necktie and other things that were done up with them.

"I just had to let her have her own way," she thought, "and she is so very good and kind."

That was the best cure for the slightly rebellious feeling in Car'line's pride about receiving gifts even from so rich a woman as Mrs. Medway.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SNOWSTORM.

IT was still that kind of fine weather that comes during late winters at the foot of the Broken Ridge Mountains. Those who were weatherwise said that it was already cold enough away up on the peaks. There had been snow up there, but not any to spare for the valleys and lowlands.

"There's more weather coming," was Mrs. Van Koven's freely-expressed opinion; but a change had already come to her own part of the Liffenkill Valley. It was a good deal as if the entire story of the break and flood and rescue in Mine No. 3 had come to board with her. All the village people so considered it, and it made her house of greater importance—as if it were part of the mine.

The Craik place had formerly been about an eighth of a mile away, but it was nearer than that now. Mr. Craik himself could work his sticks to the Van Koven

place easier and more frequently, and it was only the next day that the brown hen got out again, with all her chicks, and he had to come after them. The oldest of Mrs. Van Koven's ganders had already killed one of the chicks before he came, but he saved the rest. He was allowed to go in and see Mr. Rathburn, too, but not to talk. His best pay for coming, however, was the acquaintance he made with the miner who had been sent to take care of the injured inspector. Car'line had not yet got as far as that, and her mother was troubled with an idea that Fergus McCracken was hardly able to talk at all or else was deeply offended all the while. Car'line was afraid of him, and her mother said he would drive her crazy if he went on. She lost a large share of her work the first day before dark, and more before bedtime, for McCracken at once began to care for the cows, pigs, woodpile, water, fires, and came dangerously near feeding the geese. He did not say a word, but he went ahead and did it with the air of a man who would hurt you if you tried to stop him. So Mrs. Van Koven let him milk the cows, but she got ahead of him and fed all the poultry before he had a chance to interfere.

"It's dreadful!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven. "And Car'line in the parlor, too, talking to those folks from the village. One woman's from ten miles down the creek. There must be crowds and crowds at the mine—if so many are coming here."

The Van Koven place was a number of miles nearer, and they could get almost as excited, especially as Andy Craik was putting in his time here and had brought the two dogs with him. They had not been permitted to enter Mr. Rathburn's room, although he was doing well, but Car'line and Andy led them upstairs, and they sat down at the door of his room and howled. That proved, when it was told in the parlor, that the two setters knew what had happened.

So did Mr. Craik, and he told Fergus McCracken all about it. That was the way the grim old miner was set agoing. To be sure, he did not say much while Mr. Craik was there, but after he went off with his chick basket and his hen McCracken's face grew redder and redder, and at last his tongue broke loose.

"Mines?" he said. "What does the old limmer knaw aboot mines? I was there mysel' a' the time. I'll tell him some thengs, if he'll come doon this way, the

morrow. I've been awa' back in a deep mine a twal' month without a glim o' daylight."

Car'line heard him, and again it seemed to her as if all of a sudden she knew more—that is, more about the world that other people lived in. It had places in it for kings and emperors and dukes such as she had heard of at Mrs. Medway's, and it had other places where men could stay and work underground all the year long without coming up for a look at the sun.

The evening was pretty long, with so many visitors coming and going, but at about the end of it, just as, one after another, they went out at the front door, it seemed as if something fell with a bang at the back of the house. Mrs. Van Koven looked more and more uneasy until she exclaimed:

"Car'line! Do see what it is! I believe it's that awful old Scotch miner. Go and stop him."

Away went Car'line, and when she opened the kitchen door to look out, there he was, at the farther woodpile, loading up with a big armful of firewood.

"Why, we don't need any more," Car'line exclaimed when he came and pitched his burden spite-

fully into the woodshed and against the wall of the house. "We don't burn much wood this weather."

"Ye wull, then," growled McCracken. "Dinna you ken there's an awfu' storrum a-comin' ower th' Ridge?"

"It's a little cloudy," said Car'line, "but it's not cold. Mr. Craik says winter never held off so late since he can remember."

"It's na a-holdin' off," said the miner grumpily. "I can hear it a-rollin' like ye do at the back of a mine."

"Why," said Car'line, "there isn't any stormy weather down a mine. I've heard them say so."

"Isn't there, then?" replied McCracken. "Th' wind doesn't blaw and the snaw doesn't coom, but before folk ken o' a change oop on the level ye can hear the comin' storrum a-rollin' and a-rollin' awa' in beyont the mine head. I've worked wi' Germans that towld me a' strong tempest was aye made by them that lives i' th' mountain and awa' doon deep i' th' arth. They mak' 'em there and they lets 'em loose, betimes, and I can't say how true it is, but I can feel in my bones that there's wan a-rollin', the noo."

Car'line understood him pretty well. She was not

quite ready to believe that storms were manufactured by the goblins away in under Broken Ridge, for instance, but she glanced into the woodshed and wondered at the pile of wood he had made, after heaping up the kitchen woodbox and all the floor near it. She turned and hurried back to the parlor, and she stepped in so suddenly that all the talk ceased and they looked at her.

"Mother," she said, "McCracken's piling up wood. He says a great snowstorm——"

"Oh, I must be going!"

"So must I!"

"Dear me! I wouldn't be caught in it for anything."

"Oh, Mrs. Van Koven, why didn't I know it before! It's awful! Winter's right here, anyhow. It might ha' come weeks ago."

Everybody in the room made remarks, and they all got up at once, as if they had been waiting for something to set them going and were almost glad it had come. Nevertheless, as they poured out of the house toward the gate and began to look at the sky for signs, they could not find any.

"What does he mean?" said Mrs. Van Koven.

"Why, mother," replied Car'line, "I told you. When he lived underground he knew if a storm was coming."

Some of the visitors evidently felt as if more time might have been given them, but Mrs. Van Koven was hardly inside the house again before she remarked:

"I do hope it'll come. Then they won't. There'll be an awful lot of work in this house with that inspector to care for and old McCracken. There's nothing like men to make work."

The old miner was not making any just then, but he was carefully examining a broad-bladed wooden snow-shovel he had found at the barn, declaring,

"It's a' soond and whole. There's twa o' them. I'll need 'em i' th' morn. I'll no let the place be snawed under."

Car'line went upstairs with a queer idea that if she should see snow in the morning it would frighten her, because it would be such a storm as the old Scotch miner or his German friend said they had heard getting ready to come.

She did not have to wait until morning. That is,

it was very dark yet, although the night was far spent, when she was awakened by a roaring, groaning sound all around the house. She sprang up and went to the door of her room just in time, as she opened it, to hear Fergus McCracken going into Mr. Rathburn's room and saying:

"It's a' right, Mr. Inspector. It's a fine gust as ever ye saw. Dinna ye hear it? It began frae the sooth, but it's a-swingin' aroond to nor'west by no'th, and the snaw's coom wi' it. Hark to th' rattle o' th' windows and th' screechin' on the ruff and ower th' chimbleys! It's fine!"

"Why, Mack," said the inspector, his voice faint still, but firmer than when he came, "do you mean it's going to be what they call a blizzard?"

"I dunno if 't'll be all ower the coontry," said McCracken, "but this valley 'll get a' that could be dune for it i' the Broken Ridge Mountains."

"It came from beyond them," said Rathburn, listening to the uproar; but the old miner shook his head.

Car'line went back to her own room only to find her mother already there—the good mother that she was—to tell her:

"Now, child, don't you be scared by anything he can say. It's going to be nothing but one of our old-fashioned snowstorms. It's been a-holding off and a-holding off till there's a great deal of it, and now—well, now it's got here. Oh, how it is blowing!"

The pipe-hole in the chimney of that room was open, and just then there came down through it a perfect scream of the fierce wind from the Ridge—or from wherever else it came.

"That's wan o' them!" exclaimed McCracken, sitting by Rathburn's bed, but he did not explain whether or not he meant it was one of the goblins that manufactured the blizzard in their hidden storm factory under the earth.

The morning itself did not come as early as usual. Everybody in that village was accustomed to stir about by candlelight at the beginning of midwinter days, but the time to blow out the candles was put off considerably. It was a rough morning, too, for any who had failed to fill their woodboxes and coal scuttles overnight.

Car'line was in the kitchen with two lamps lighted to keep her company, but she had not herself kindled

the fine coal fire in the range-stove, nor the heaping log fire in the old-fashioned fireplace in the sitting-room. Both had been well ablaze when she came down, and the milk-pails were missing. So was McCracken for some time, and Car'line had all the work to herself until suddenly two doors opened at once.

Through one of them, from the sitting-room, rushed in Mrs. Van Koven, exclaiming:

"Oh, what a storm you've got!"

Through the outer door, stamping heavily as he came, entered the squarely-made shape of the old miner, as white as snow could make him, a pail of milk in each hand and on his face the first smile they had seen there.

"Ach! ma'am!" he exclaimed. "It's a fine, brave blaw as ever ye saw. If it keeps on it'll snaw the valley under. It'll stop every railway train i' th' land, and it'll block the streets o' a' the toons. No street cars'll run the day. Men can sit still for once, excepting them as has the luck to be awa' doon the mines! They're aye unlucky. I'm glad I'm here."

CHAPTER X.

ALL IN WHITE.

"WHY, mother, we're going to be snowed in!" exclaimed Car'line, looking out through a clear patch that she had scraped the frost from on one of the sitting-room windows.

"I don't care if we are!" responded Mrs. Van Koven. "Seems to me as if all sorts o' things had been happening, and it's time they stopped. No more folks'll come now, and we can get our work done."

"I guess there isn't much to do," said Car'line. "He's out shoveling paths."

She referred to the old miner. But her mother said:

"Let him! It keeps him busy. There's always work enough about such a house as this is. I'm so glad Mr. Rathburn's better, and all he can do is to lie still. It'll be weeks and weeks before he can walk around. You can't go to Mrs. Medway's, either."

"I don't want to," said Car'line, and her mother sat still and stared at her in blank amazement.

"Don't want to go to Mrs. Medway's? I'd want to if I was a girl. All the girls in the village'd like to go."

Car'line was silent, for it was only half true that she herself did not care to go. The fact was that things were indeed happening too fast, and she was willing to have a breathing spell.

The storm was coming furiously indeed. Right out in it, between the house and the little bridge in the path to the barn, was the old Scotch miner, shovel in hand, fighting valiantly, for the gusts and the whirls of blinding snow were hitting at him like so many boxers.

He was a man of extraordinary physical power, accustomed to heavy weights of coal and iron and to long days of toil with pick-axe and crowbar. His broad snow-shovel was a mere goose-feather. He had worked in shafts and tunnels and galleries, through all kinds of rock, but this was his first fight with snowdrifts and a blizzard.

Every now and then a laugh rang out, with a Scotch burr in any words that came with it, and the eddying

blasts howled back and threw snow in his face and tried to upset him.

"Oh, but it's grand!" he exclaimed. "I'm glad I'm here. Think o' that bit lassie wi' the bright black e'en shov'lin' snaw in the like o' this!"

Car'line had said as much herself, and so had her mother, but the latter had insisted upon going out to sweep the snow from the front stoop. She would have gone farther toward the gate, but while her feet were on the lower step the porch behind her began to fill up. She turned to look at it, in much vexation, but before she could speak there was snow in her mouth and she had to catch quickly at the nearest side-post to keep from being blown over.

"Dear me!" she sputtered. "I'll go in till it's over. It drifts faster than I can sweep."

That was the difficulty encountered by Fergus McCracken, but he steadily fought his way to the bridge, and there was hardly a speck of snow on that.

"Just so wi' all they railway bridges," he remarked. "But think o' the deep cuts where the trains'll be stuck the day. It's fine. I'm pleased to be here; but all ower the warld the men that's underground are comfortable.

They're as warrum as they ever were. After a', the safest place is a good deep mine. There's real comfort awa' doon where na storrums can coom."

The path he had opened was closing behind him at several points, but he fought on toward the cow stable gleefully, for what he was doing did not impress him as being work. It was light and easy fun, at which no man could tire.

Mrs. Van Koven retreated into her house with a humiliating sense of defeat, but she rallied quickly and took up the task of building a log fire in the parlor.

"Somebody might come," she said, "and he brought in quantities of wood. Coal's cheap enough, but we get our wood just for the cutting. 'Tisn't extravagant."

There was a kind of lull in the household after the parlor fire was lighted. Mrs. Van Koven went upstairs to look in and see if Mr. Rathburn wanted anything, and Car'line turned from staring through the window at the storm to come and sit down and look into the rapidly climbing fire. It seemed to take such pleasure in finding out stick after stick and in beginning to burn it. There had always been plenty of fire in all the

sticks, thought Car'line, but nobody had ever set them going.

"That's me!" she said to herself. "Nothing ever came. There's been plenty of work, too. I don't want to do any more of this kind of work. I wish I were rich. I want to go to Europe. I want to be able to help people. I'd like to spend money."

That was one thing that she had never done. Whatever money came to the family was handled by her mother, even when it was spent, small sums of it, for Car'line.

"I never had a whole dollar," was her way of putting it, and she added: "It's dreadful, too, to be always spending the only dollar you've got. That's the way all poor people live. Mother has some put away. She's a real good, careful woman. I wish she had so much she needn't be so careful. Oh, dear, I wish she'd stop working! She can't help stopping if this storm keeps on.—There! If that isn't sleigh-bells!"

She sprang up and went to the window, but she was too late to see anything. The sound of bells went by and she could only wonder who had had the courage to venture out.

"Somebody that had to go," she was saying, when she heard another jingle coming up the road, and it ceased at her own gate, for it belonged to the stout team that pulled the doctor's cutter, and he had come for a look at his patient.

"I got here!" he exclaimed as he came stamping in, "but I guess this is the last chance I'll have. I must see all I can this morning. The roads'll be all blocked before night.—Where's your mother, Car'-line?"

"Upstairs with him."

"I'll go right up. He's going to get well. Call McCracken."

Up the stairs hurried the rosy-faced doctor and out at the kitchen door went Car'line, only poorly defended by the big shawl she wrapped around her and pulled over her head.

"He's out almost to the stable," she said. "The cows must be taken care of. How those pigs are squealing!"

The path before her was open for a short distance, and she struggled onward, although the fierce wind nearly swept her off her feet. Then it seemed to come

behind her and urge her onward, while all the shrill outcry from the pigpen was borne away, and it was a minute before she heard it again.

"I wish I could stop!" she exclaimed. "Oh, it's a drift! Dear me, so deep!—Mr. McCracken, help me!"

He was away on beyond the bridge working tremendously.

"I'll ha' the coos attended to," he remarked. "They've na horses, but the pultry'll need na more feedin' the day. The geese do wull i' cold. So do they ducks. There'll be plenty aigs."

"O—ooh!" shivered poor Car'line as she saw the wind-swept, icy-looking little bridge before her. "The brook isn't even frozen yet. It's deep. I might be drowned.—Oh, mother!"

She could not help screaming, but the blizzard goblin must have been partly friendly, for he gave her a great push in the right direction, and she was able also to run for a moment. She went right across the bridge instead of down into the water, but beyond her all was white, swirling, blinding.

"Help me!" she shouted, and this time the old

miner's ears caught a sound that made him turn his head.

"Was that frae the hoose?" he asked. "I could na hear that far. Luk at me path! Mon alive, I knew 'twould be drifted sune—but it's awfu'! I'll gang to the hoose. The coos'll be all right noo. I can get to 'em."

Car'line tightened her grasp upon her shawl, but she was crying, for she was frightened.

"Nobody knows where I am," she said. "I can't stand up! It's another drift! Help me!"

Wrathful, pitiless was the shriek of the blast that seemed to answer her own. It was all so sudden, so unexpected, to be stormed down and drifted under right there near her own home. She was bewildered, chilled through, out of breath, for the zero breath of the goblin that sits by the North Pole was upon her—not any mere gnome, making ordinary gales in some quiet, warm workshop under the Broken Ridge Mountains.

Strong men were going down that day, and horses were frozen at their work. Locomotives were "stalled" and snow-anchored on their rails. Ships were blown ashore, and great steamers turned their heads to the

Her cry was answered by a shout.

storm and fought it, quivering from stem to stern. No wonder Car'line went down; but her shawl was blown from her head just as her strength failed her, and her last faint cry was answered by a strong-lunged shout,

"I' th' Laird's name, it's the bonnie lassie! Oh, mon, what did she coom oot for?—I've got her!"

Up she came in his iron arms, and then even he all but staggered for a moment; but it was partly with the surprise of finding her there.

"Dang the coos!" he said. "I heard her call me, and I no dreamed o' it's bein' her—the bonnie bairn! Laird! To think o' her oot i' the blizzard!"

On he strode, however—holding her tightly and abusing himself for not having heard more quickly—over the foot bridge, straining a little lest he might slip into the gurgling stream that was choking so fast with the snow hurling in.

"That's by!" he said. "I was amaist feared o' the burn. What if she'd fallen in and I no here! Noo for the hoose. Was her mither clean wud to send the lassie?"

Mrs. Van Koven was not crazy at all in that wise, but she had left the doctor with his patient and had

flitted downstairs after McCracken, as well as to get hot water from the kitchen.

"Car'line?" she called out as soon as she was at the bottom of the stairs, "Car'line, where are you?"

A glance into the parlor. Another into the sitting-room. Again she called, more loudly, and again there was no answer.

"Did she go to the gate? Oh, the foolish child! No, she's not there, and the doctor's cutter's half hidden in the snowbank. Oh, dear! where is she?—I must take up the hot water. But he wants to see McCracken."

That took her to the back windows, but through them she could see nothing but blinding whirls of white.

"She was downstairs, I know she was.—Car'line! Oh, what shall I do?"

It was a cry rather than a question, but she was still staring toward the barns when she thought she saw something moving in the almost impenetrable storm mist.

"Car'line!" she screamed. "Is it her?"

She could hardly stir for looking, and she shivered all over before she could move toward the door, for what she saw, as the wind itself tore away the curtain,

was the old Scotch miner, white as a polar bear, and in his arms was Car'line, her eyes shut and her bare face thickly strewn with flakes, for he had no hand to spare at that moment and all he thought of was:

"The dure! Who'll ope' the dure? Ah, Laird, the lassie! To think o' her bein' snawed oonder! I'd rather live in a mine than where the like o' this might coom."

The door swung open to let in a great rush of snow; but when Mrs. Van Koven sprang out and screamed, "Car'line! Child! Oh!" the eyes of McCracken's burden did not open.

"She was a'maist gane, ma'am," said he. "She's no dead, the bonnie lass! I found her just as she went doon, awa' beyant the burn."

"She went to call you. The doctor's here," said Mrs. Van Koven. "Give her to me. Tell him to come. Oh, my darling! What did you do it for?"

"Tak' her, ma'am," said the old man in a voice that was wonderfully soft and tender. "I thank the Laird that he med me hearken. Ach! 'Twas gude o' Him to bring me to her in time. She'll coom to quickly. I'll fetch the doctor."

Off he hastened, but Car'line's eyes were slowly opening.

"Did you come for me, mother? I thought it was some one with wings—great wide, white wings."

"That was the drifting snow, Car'line," replied her unimaginative but weeping mother.

"Thank God, it wasn't angels at all; it was only Fergus McCracken."

"I'm all well now," murmured Car'line, but her escape had been terribly narrow.

CHAPTER XI.

UP AT CRAIK'S.

"DOCTOR," exclaimed McCracken, stepping on somewhat noisy tiptoes into the sick-room, "it's no th' inspector. It's the lassie. She fell in the snaw and I fetched her in. You'll look at her noo."

"Indeed I will," said the doctor, jumping up from his chair. "Is she frozen?"

"Na frozen, only fainted, I think, but 'twas awfu'. Ye'll coom?"

"Right away," he said. "Rathburn's all right. It'll be a slow case, but I've no fear about him. There's less fever. Go right along, as I told you. I've not a minute to spare.—Good-bye, Rathburn. Perhaps I can't get here again for days. Worst storm we ever had in this valley."

Out he went, leaving the old miner in the attitude of a man being pulled in opposite directions. What

he needed was the push Rathburn gave him when he said:

"Go, Mack. I want to know about her. Was she under a drift?"

"Not for lang," said McCracken. "Just a bit, or I'd ha' lost her, for she was coverin' fast wi' snaw—the bonnie lassie! I'll go and come back to ye."

Out he went, and the inspector lay still.

"I heard the storm roar," he murmured. "I lay here all the while. I'd be of no use, whatever came. So strange not to be able to move! I was never so before."

Downstairs the doctor was leaning over Car'line inquiringly.

"No," he said, "don't put her in bed. Give her a cup of hot tea and let her sit up. People go to bed too easily. 'Twon't hurt her. She'll know better next time. Why, Caroline, this wind can blow down a house if it gets a good hold. Stay in!"

"Oh, my geese!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven.

"They've all their feathers on," laughed the doctor. "Caroline went into the snow without feathers enough. I'm going."

"Oh, doctor," said Mrs. Van Koven, "can't you do something more for her?"

"Not a thing," he said. "I must make haste or I shall not be able to do anything more for anybody. She'll be all right in a couple of days."

The instructions he left behind him were ample, but Mrs. Van Koven's idea seemed to be that he ought to be able to do something for the blizzard—something quieting. She watched him engineer his difficult task of getting his cutter turned around, but she did not stay to see him get in.

"What can I do for Car'line?" she was saying as she turned to hurry into the kitchen, but she did not get there.

"Mother? He brought me in here."

Car'line's voice came from the parlor, and there she was, in the large armed rocking-chair before the fire, packed in with all the shawls and wraps and things that McCracken could lay his hands on. He had proved a rapid workman, and he had been lucky, too, for he had found no less than four very fat feather pillows that Mrs. Van Koven had been filling, and Car'line was as warm as any goose that was out in the snug drifted-

over and all but hidden goose house next door to the hennery. There were the comfortable fowls huddled together and quacking thoughtfully among themselves about the weather, and here was Car'line with an absolutely delicious sensation of being before the parlor fire instead of out in the snow.

"Why, child," said her mother, "I'm so glad you're here! I sha'n't let you do a stroke o' work for ever so long."

"It's not for her to work," remarked the old miner, beaming upon Car'line, his rugged face glowing and his stubby beard bristling with kindly feeling. "You'll no gang oot yersel', ma'am. She's no hurt—the bonnie lassie!"

She was very different from anything he was in the habit of seeing down in Mine No. 3, and his opinion evidently was that Car'line was beautiful. That was something which had never yet occurred to her mother, and probably not to the rest of the valley people. She did look unusually interesting among her pillows—they were white as snow—but other mothers considered their daughters better-looking than Car'line Van Koven, "all but her eyes, and they are really fine."

They were very bright just now as she tried to express her gratitude to the old miner, but she had by no means recovered her strength yet. Being beaten in a wrestling match with a blizzard is by no means a small affair.

"It was dreadful, mother," she said, "just when the wind blew me over, to think of you, and nobody with you to help, and so much work to do. I tried to get up——"

"Darling!" sobbed Mrs. Van Koven. "And if it hadn't been for Mr. Rathburn getting hurt in the mine he wouldn't ha' been there."

She meant McCracken, and he spoke back at once:

"Indeed, ma'am, I'd not. I was away back in the far drift o' th' mine, shut in, wi' water to me middle. I was no hurt, but I'm good for nothing till I get ower it."

They had not known until then that he was one of the rescued miners and that he himself was regarded as something of an invalid. That seemed to be a humbug except for the furlough it gave him at half wages. As for the inspector, the railway company had telegraphed that no expense would be spared by them in

caring for him. He could have McCracken all winter if need should be.

"You can just stay here!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven. "It's little enough we can do——"

"A' right," said the old miner with his best voice —very different from his ordinary speech that came so rarely. "I'm glad to be here. In the hoose she's as safe as she'd be in a mine. I'll no let her gang oot again till the drifts are melted. But there'll be awfu' floodin' when the winter's ower."

"We're shut off from our neighbors just now," said Mrs. Van Koven.

"I wish we could hear from the Craiks," said Car'-line suddenly. "Their house is away down. It might be covered."

"Their barn is close by," said her mother. "The hencoop's just a step from the kitchen door. I'd like to know——"

"I'll do it, ma'am," said McCracken. "Sune's our ain paths are open I'll run a tunnel through the snaw and go find 'em. I'll dig them oot."

Part of the hencoop of the Craik family was not even so far from the kitchen-door as Mrs. Van Koven

thought. In the very dark hour toward the end of the night Mr. Craik had aroused the family and the hired man. He had not spared Andy, but had shouted almost in his ear:

"Get right up, Andrew. We must all get up. I've got to go out and see about that hen. She'll lose every chick. There's no telling where she'd go to if her coop should blow over. It's going to snow."

Andy was on his feet in a twinkling and forgot entirely that he ought now to be feeling the worse for what he had done in Mine No. 3. The hired man was a tall, lank fellow by the name of Smith, and as yet he seemed disposed to do little more than yawn and look stupid.

"Snow?" said Andy. "First we've had, 'cept a little gust at Thanksgiving. Then we'll have sleighing. Wish the pond had frozen before any snow came. It'll make it rough instead of glary."

By the time he was fully dressed he could hear his father's sticks on the kitchen floor.

"I'll bring her right in here," said Mr. Craik. "Soon's they come down, Andy can bring them—he and Smith—coop and all. I can have them right under my eye."

Down they came, and they hardly needed to open the outer door to understand the entire situation. It was well for the brown hen and her family that they began so early, for just as Andy reached her coop an angry rush of wind took it up and threw it away behind the apple tree. She was a model mother. She never stirred a peg, but crouched low and clucked hard, covering all her brood but one unlucky little yellow fellow that had climbed upon her back. Andy caught but a glimpse of him by the light of the lantern, and then the pitiless blizzard caught him up and carried him away no one would ever know where.

"Catch the coop!" shouted Andy to Smith. "I'll put her and the chickens into the milk pail. I can carry 'em in."

It was ticklish work, for the brown hen pecked him with all her might and squawked vigorously, but he grasped her tightly and forced her in, dropping her brood around her.

"Got 'em!" he said. "Only lost that one. Come on, Smith. We'll have to shovel paths."

"I guess so," replied Smith; but the wind had come again after that coop, and he could say no more.

Mrs. Craik met her son as he came in.

"Are you up, too, mother?" he exclaimed. "You hadn't anything to get up for. We've saved the hen——"

"I was up before your father was," she replied calmly. "If we're going to be blown away I want to be pretty well wrapped up. This is awful!"

"There!" remarked her husband as he arranged the coop in the corner. "She'll do very well. Now, Andy, I was thinking, soon as you've had your breakfast, and have fed the pigs, and the poultry in the big coop, and fetched in plenty of wood, and the paths are swept clean, you just put on your hat and take Mr. Rathburn his books. His portmanty went yesterday. And you can do some errands in the village. But you'll have to have fires all over the house to keep it warm."

"Yes, sir," said Andy. But the storm put in a derisive howl which may have been a windy scoff at the idea of errands to be done in Salterville that day.

Nevertheless, after daylight came—what there was of it—Andy and the hired man did go out with snow shovels and brooms. They worked successfully enough behind the house, some of their paths not even filling

up; but when they went around in front, Andy's first remark was:

"Cracky!"

"That's where the big drift's going to be," said Smith. "Right in the road between your house and Van Koven's. The bluff kind o' checks it and lets it drap."

The snow was "drapping" fast all along the line, and the heap already constructed was astonishing.

"If it keeps on that way," said Andy, "it'll be bigger'n a house. Rathburn'll have to do without his books a while."

"He won't need 'em," said Smith. "No man can read much with a broken leg."

CHAPTER XII.

THE OLD SYCAMORE.

THERE was warmth and peace and plenty and a great lull inside of the house. If all other dwellings in the Liffenkill valley were as well prepared and provided as was Mrs. Van Koven's, small harm might be done by the blizzard. Nevertheless, it was occasioning a great deal of discontent both among the young and the old. There were not a few boys who made remarks like Andy Craik's when he came in from shoveling:

"All that snow and no sleighing! No skating either! I guess the snowplows won't be of much use this time."

"Seems to me it can't blow any harder," said his mother. "If the roof was going to go, it would have gone."

"I don't know," remarked Mr. Craik encouragingly, making his way to a window. "I've heard it crack several times, and it may be loosening. A good

many of the houses down in the village were put up cheap and shackling, and some of 'em are old. I s'pose they couldn't stand it all day."

After a little, Smith and Andy went out again; but all their shoveling was as nothing to the feats performed by Fergus McCracken. His other snow shovel was out in the drift where he had found Car'line. Besides, he had heard her express anxiety about the cows, and he was bound to bring her fresh news concerning them.

There she sat in the big rocking-chair before the glowing fireplace, and even her mother came and sat down now and then, as if that were a place that was safer than others, or as if she had a duty to watch over Car'line.

"I wish you'd go to sleep," she said. "They say folks are always sleepy after they've been kind o' frozen."

"I don't feel sleepy," replied Car'line. "I just feel good and lazy."

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven, "you may feel any way you please! But 'pears to me as if I hadn't anything to do—hear that?—If the house should blow down!"

That was a reminder which the blizzard gave them every now and then, but between times Car'line could lie and think, and one thought which came to her was:

"I don't believe Mrs. Medway is a bit more comfortable than I am. But then the storm can't blow away a stone house. Rich people are safer. What loads and loads of things she has to remember!—Places she went to! People! She told me about the palaces, and the picture galleries, and the churches, and the Pyramids. She went to them all."

Mrs. Medway had been a pretty industrious tourist in foreign lands, no doubt, and now Car'line, sitting by the parlor fire, with not a bit of work calling her to come and do it, was also traveling to all the far-away, wonderful places she could think of. She even imagined herself in a costly white satin, long-trailed robe, in the Prince of Wales's great drawing-room, looking on while the dukes and duchesses, the earls and countesses, and all the other great and glittering people whirled around the room. The music was beautiful, and all the women wore coronets and diamonds.

"All because her father found some coal mines,"

thought Car'line; but that referred only to Mrs. Medway and not to the splendid people beyond the sea.

Their ancestors had found something or other. Some of them had found the possessions of other people; but Car'line did not dream back so far. She even forgot the Indians who had once been the owners of the Liffenkill Valley and the Broken Ridge Mountains, coal and iron and all.

"Mother and I must work," she said to herself. But out in the snowbank at the door of the barn McCracken was taking a contrary view, for he was grumbling.

"Na—na, the lassie! I'll no let her put her foot frae the hoose. I'm glad to be here i' the storrum. The kye and the hogs are a' right. She bade me fetch in a pair o' ducks for the table. It's lang since I've eaten duck.—Yon was where I found her. I'll no let her work. There's no need. Ah!—but she's bonnie! I never had a lassie o' my ain."

The old miner had found his first snow shovel where he had dropped it to pick up Car'line, and he now turned away from the barn declaring:

"I must gang and see how she's doin'. I'll tak' the

ducks wi' me. They're the right thing for th' inspector. I'm no anxious aboot him, but it's gude luck to ha'e the care o' him. I want to see the b'ye Andy, too. Where'd we a' ha' been but for they twa?"

Not many minutes later he was sitting by Rathburn's bedside as still as a post. He was all the more nearly motionless because the sufferer was not so. The doctor had predicted:

"Higher fever during this hurricane. I have found it so with all my patients. It will pass off as the weather settles. Only watch him."

The fever had come and Rathburn was restless. Bandaged and plastered and with one leg in splints, he could not toss to and fro, but he also could not lie entirely still, and he murmured and muttered in his half-sleep.

"He's dreamin' o' mines," whispered McCracken to Mrs. Van Koven, when she came in. "He's a wanderin' aroond under th' 'arth, findin' oot where the coal measures gang to, and th' iron. He kens them a'. If he could mind what he dreamed when he waks oop I'd sink a shaft right there and the mine'd be a gude ane."

It was a miner's superstition, but the fevered dream of the inspector was carrying him, in the most natural and matter-of-course way, among his professional duties and studies. Without being altogether delirious, he was so near it that his wanderings among the geological formations were fantastical. He was finding a great deal of coal and then losing track of it again right away, to find iron next, and even metals that were never found at all in that region by anybody wide awake.

"That's it!" he muttered at last. "Here's the out-shaft. It comes up right in front of Mrs. Van Koven's. I always thought it would. She'll never have to buy any more coal——"

Crash! A triumphant shriek of the blizzard came with it.

"What's that, Mack? Is it the house?"

Rathburn was awake and his eyes were roving swiftly around the room.

"I daur na leave him!" exclaimed McCracken anxiously. "But what was yon breakin'? Naething at a', my boy. Lie still. Trouble no your mind aboot it. Mayhap 'twas a tree."

He was standing close by the bed as he spoke, but he would rather have been downstairs.

"Go! Go!" said Rathburn. "I won't get up. I'll stay here till you come back, upon my word I will. But if more rock has fallen I must know about it. All the men are beyond, in the far gallery. If we can't get them out they will drown. See about it and report at once."

Even to quiet him, his rough old nurse had to leave him; but he did so almost in a tremble.

"If it's the hoose," he thought, "what'll I do wi' him and what'll become o' th' lassie? The drifts are awfu' noo, and the wind blaws wi' power. The gude Laird keep us a'! It's his wind."

It was not any part of the house that crashed, but Car'line had sprung from her chair and her mother had screamed loudly when the great broad-armed sycamore, hundreds of years old, that had towered a score of yards above at the roadside, came thundering down, its leafless branches splintering in the very dooryard and barely missing the house front. If the wind had not succeeded in whirling it away a little, as it threw it, there would have been a house ruin to hurl drifts

upon; but the goblin of the storm was disappointed, in part, for all he wrecked was the gigantic tree which had angered him after defying all the storms of other winters. There seemed to be no other tree near enough to throw at the house. There were not even any loose blinds on it to swing and bang, and the only thing to be done right away was to shake it vigorously, make it rock to and fro a little, and rattle its window sashes as if it were about to break the glass and get in.

"Oh!" groaned poor Mrs. Van Koven. "What is going to happen next?—Car'line! Go back and sit down. The tree's flat on the ground. That's all the wind can do.—Keep away from the door! Don't you look out!"

"Oh, mother," exclaimed Car'line, "I want to see just what it did do."

"Ye'll no try!" commanded McCracken at the foot of the stairs and springing forward. "I feared ye would. It's no safe to ope' the door, ma'am."

"We'll not," said Mrs. Van Koven.

"'Twas the barns I thought o'," he said. "The tree's no harm noo."

They both followed him to the rear windows and

each had a moment of time in which to clear an eye-hole on a pane before a word was spoken.

"Car'line!" gasped Mrs. Van Koven reproachfully, as if reproving her daughter for some neglect of duty.

"Oh, Laird!" groaned the old miner. "It's gane! Wi' a' the snaw on it!"

"It's the roof o' the farther barn, mother," exclaimed Car'line. "How it does sail! Away up! It'll go to the village."

"Aye!" said McCracken. "There's daunger to any place it falls in. I hope it'll no strike a hoose."

"Oh, my geese!" murmured Mrs. Van Koven.

"They're safe enough yet," said Car'line. "So are the cows. The old barn had hay in it, but the snow won't hurt it much."

So quietly, so coolly she spoke that her mother first, and then Fergus McCracken, turned and looked at her.

"The bonnie lassie!" he said with energy. "She's mair courage than I had mysel'. Coom, noo, Mrs. Van Koven. Gang and sit doon. That gust's ower and I must be quickly wi' th' inspector. He's oot o' his head the day."

"Car'line!" was all that her mother could think of to say just then, but she was straining her eyes into the storm-drift above the barn as if she hoped to see something more of the flying roof. It might come back.

"I'm going for another look at that tree," thought Car'line. "It was so green and splendid last summer! It was the tallest tree on the road, except the great elm away beyond Mr. Craik's. I'm so sorry!"

Her spirits were actually rising, nevertheless, and she had a wicked feeling, not to be told to anybody, that she was enjoying the blizzard. It was so entirely new and extraordinary!

"Why," said Mrs. Van Koven, giving up the barn-top as gone forever, "Car'line wasn't frightened. And after such an escape as she had! I'm glad she's so plucky. It helps me amazingly. But then I never knew her to get scared. And we never had anything happen."

There lay the fallen sycamore, its gaunt, bare arms held out as if asking somebody to come and help it up. It had been torn up by the roots and into the deep hollow left in the slope beyond the house the snow

was drifting rapidly. It was a kind of pocket for a blizzard to put away some of his white property.

Car'line was speaking of the blizzard when she remarked:

"I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

Up at the other house Mrs. Craik, seemingly restored to her ordinary placidity, was saying to her son:

"Now, Andrew, you needn't shovel any more. You're too tired. It'll soon be over."

"No, it won't," said Mr. Craik hopefully. "A storm like this might last for a week, and it'll be awful cold afterward. Right down to zero all the rest o' the winter."

CHAPTER XIII.

SNOWED IN.

IF what is sometimes called "the first violence of the storm" was over, its second violence, now blowing and snowing, was all that even Mr. Craik could have asked for. All day long the drifts piled up and the roads were hidden more and more completely. The village of Salterville had not been blown away, but all that was visible of it was the houses. Nobody tried to go from one house to another. Even the tavern was effectually shut up, for in front of it, smashing the sign-post first and then pitching forward to stay and lean against the house, as if out of breath, was a great flaring mass of boards and shingles. The whirlwind had brought to that resting-place the roof of Mrs. Van Koven's barn, and there it would be found when the storm should be over. The snow was rapidly heaping against it to keep it from taking wings again and getting away.

Mrs. Van Koven was already resigned to the loss of her barn-roof, but she had been up in the garret to see if the top of her home showed any signs of flying.

"It won't go," she said, "I know it won't. Car'line was up here and she said so. What has got into that girl? I do declare, she's just a-coming out! I didn't know 'twas in her. She's more sense than a grown-up woman."

It was not easy to say precisely where Car'line had showed any such thing. She was very cheerful, to be sure, and she hardly seemed to be any the worse for having been snowed under. If she felt so she would not say so.

Fergus McCracken was out of doors every now and then.

"I've kep' the path open to the brig' ower the burn," he said. "Beyond that is a drift I'm cuttin' through, and the coos and a' will be cared for. I'll not let you or the lassie gang oot, ma'am."

There was no need that they should, and the dim daylight faded at last, and the lamps were set burning, all of them. Every room looked bright and warm in spite of the blizzard, and after supper Car'line went

back to her rocking-chair of her own accord. The pillows were no longer there, but her mother sat on the opposite side of the fire and now and then stopped knitting to look at her, while the old miner came to put a fresh log on the fire and say it was not storming quite so hard.

"I've been all over the house," thought Car'line, staring into the fire. "It's all the same, but every room looks different. This room does. What a change it makes just to fix over the same things! I saw that at Mrs. Medway's, but I didn't know what it was till after I came away. She arranges things beautifully."

Her mother was also thinking.

"What can she have been dressing up for right in a snowstorm and all shut up at home? She hasn't put on a thing, either, and now how she has changed the furniter around!"

Straws show which way the wind is blowing if it's a steady wind, but not if it's gusty. We hardly ever know the precise direction of any storms that go on inside of us. Car'line did not know anything about any change in her, but she could agree with her mother when she said:

"'Pears to me I never knew quite so many things to happen. It was time there was a new roof on that barn, but I wish I knew where the old one has gone to."

It would not have done her a bit of good, and it was the middle of the next forenoon before even the dwellers in the tavern could investigate the matter. At about that hour the blizzard tired out, or else he had gone on to blow around other villages, having finished Salterville. He had left behind him a positively desperate state of things. Nobody could guess how much snow had fallen, for it was nowhere "on a level." Long reaches of street and road were clear and clean, not requiring a broom, showing favoritism somewhere, while in selected spots, often before the houses of the very best of people, there were drifts made up of all the undistributed snow. The pond below the village was a sight to see. Slush and ice had been lodged at the dam and snow had heaped on and frozen, increasing the height of the dam, and now the Liffenkill was pouring through a narrow place in the middle and the pond behind it was a great deal larger than before. It was always largest in winter and spring, but this was

something that had not been known to come, so much of it.

Mr. Rathburn seemed more like himself, with less fever. He had drowsy spells, too, and real sleeps, during which McCracken could leave him and go and shovel snow; but his naps were full of dreams, and his rough old nurse remarked:

"There's naething can keep him oot o' the mines that he's finding. Wha can guess them, where they are? He'll never remember ane o' them when he wakes."

That was bad, considering how correctly a man asleep can travel under a mountain and find out what there is there; but McCracken made up for the loss of the dreamland shafts and tunnels by those he was making above ground.

"I do want to hear from Mrs. Craik so much!" pleaded Mrs. Van Koven, but she had to be satisfied with his somewhat stubborn rejoinder:

"Our ain barns first, ma'am. A' o' them. It's to be a lang path to the toon.—Aye, I'll care for the neebors as sune as I can. They're no waur aff than we."

She could not feel sure of that, and she said so to her daughter just after the noonday meal.

"Car'line," she said, "if anything has happened to them——"

Not many minutes later Mrs. Van Koven was upstairs caring for Mr. Rathburn, and she had forgotten the Craiks for the time. She was listening to the inspector's dream talk about geological formations, and away in among her other thoughts was a very old resident of her mind that repeated, again and again:

"I wish Tom Van Koven had found coal. I could do more for Car'line if he had."

A step, trying not to be heavy, sounded behind her, and she turned to hear, in a whisper:

"A' right noo, ma'am. I ha' fed the pigs and the kye——"

"The geese!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven.

"Na feather o' them is gane, ma'am. The ducks are fine, and the pultry. Ye'd be glad to see 'em——"

"I'll go!" she said. "I do want to see how those geese are doing. You stay here with the inspector."

"No need, ma'am," he replied. "I'll look to the front o' the hoose. I've not been oot there."

Somebody else had, and she had taken the smaller snow shovel with her. She could make her way to the gate, climbing a little over the shattered branches of the sycamore; but there Car'line paused in dismay.

"We can never get to the village!" was her first exclamation. "I can't see ten rods down the road, the snow is heaped so high."

She gazed for a moment, and then she turned to look up the valley. She could see the mountains, for the air was clear, and something Mrs. Medway had told her made her remark:

"That's the way the Alps look—all white. I mean to see them some day. They go up into the sky, she said, but our mountains never looked so tall before.—Oh, dear! This is dreadful! The tree-trunk fell right across the road. What a drift!"

It had been just the thing for the blizzard to pile snow against.

"We can't get to Mr. Craik's any more than we can to the village. They're all snowed in. Their house may be blown all to pieces. There were trees around it——"

"Hech! The lassie! Bide a wee! Ye'll no shovel!

Come oot o' that!" came with a kind of chuckle from the doorway. "You want to see the neebors? Weel, you may, then. Ye'll hae your ain way wi' old McCracken. Oot, noo, lassie. I'll mak' a road to th' mountain."

The stubbornness had vanished from his face and he at once began to ply his broad-bladed snow-lifter in a way that was surprising.

"Thank you!" exclaimed Car'line. "I do wish to hear how they are! So much!"

"I'll bring you word sune, lassie," he said between tosses of the snow. "They're a' right, na doot, but I'll no let you be worrited. Gang into the hoose. Your mither's awa' yonder tending to they geese—that's warrum enough the day."

So he laughed and worked, and Car'line watched him, wondering at the rapid progress he was making; but she was all the while waxing more and more genuinely anxious about her neighbors.

There was small cause for anxiety. Mrs. Craik was doing well, for she was comfortably attending to the sleeping-rooms in the second story. The brown hen and her chicks were well, in spite of the fact that Mr.

Rathburn's setters, chasing through the kitchen, had upset her coop and that she and her family were now exploring the parlor. No tree had fallen upon the house, but a perfectly monstrous cliff of driven snow had formed in front of it, outside of the yard fence. Into that drift four workers had plunged as soon as the snow stopped falling. Smith, the hired man, was eager to get to the village, and was doing his very best. Andy was with him, but he had released the setters the night before, bringing them into the house for fear the woodshed might blow away or be snowed up, and here they were now, pawing furiously, almost ready to fight their two-legged fellow-workers for the right of way into the snowbank.

"Got to tunnel through!" said Andy.

"That's what's the matter," responded Smith. "It's reg'lar mining and we're all cooped in till it's done. Toughest kind of work. Soon's we get in a little we'll have to bring the snow out on a sled."

"We can do it," said Andy. "Wish the dogs'd keep out o' the way. They think we're going to visit the inspector."

They were just getting into the snowbank where

it was higher than their heads when Mr. Craik came out upon the piazza to shout to them:

"It's just as I was prepared to fear. We haven't food enough in the house to keep us alive for more than three days. It'll take longer than that for you to cut a road to the village. Work as hard as you can, Andrew. It's of very little use to scratch into a bank like that. You'll never get through. It'll fall right in, fast as you dig it out. Worst of all, if a thaw should come and then a freeze to make ice of it all—hard as flint. I found that hen and her chickens under the sofa——"

There he paused a moment, and Andy remarked to Smith:

"I guess we'll starve. Nothing but milk, and eggs, and poultry, and apples, and potatoes, unless we kill one of the pigs and eat fresh pork."

"I wouldn't mind that," said Smith. "I can butcher a shoat first-rate, and pork goes good after sech a blizzard as this is."

"Wish I knew whether the Van Kovens were blown away," said Andy. "Father says their house was about ready to tumble down. Mother says we'll find 'em when we get there."

CHAPTER XIV.

THROUGH A BIG SNOWBANK.

IT was really a very great storm. When the next morning came it found the valley people feeling heavy and dull. All the excitement had passed away, leaving behind only the snow and a general feeling of pride at having so remarkable a blizzard. Most of the boys, however, were wishing for one of another kind, with ready-made paths instead of these drifts to shovel through. There were also unlucky boys, before whose houses there was no snowbank to boast of, and they were compelled to tell, instead, about their snow mountains "away in back" —so much bigger than any on the street.

"Car'line," said Mrs. Van Koven not long after breakfast, "don't you do another thing. You've turned all the rooms almost upside down. I don't know what's got into you. You've lifted, and you ought not to, and I just don't care how they look."

Nothing in those rooms was now in the place where it used to be, where Mrs. Van Koven had been accustomed to see it, year after year, on the same inches of the floor.

At any previous time, if Car'line had done as she now did, for any chair or table or bedstead, back it would have gone with severity the moment her mother's eyes discovered the innovation. Mrs. Van Koven, however, had been overcome by all these things that were happening, while Car'line had not.

"I didn't mean to do anything more," she replied to her mother's injunction. "I want to go out, too, and see how far he has dug into that second drift. It's higher than the one was at the tree. What digging there'll have to be done before we can know how they are at Mrs. Craik's!"

Car'line had hardly ever before said as much as that at one time, but her mother did not now even look surprised. She only said:

"Dear me! We can't so much as guess what's become of them. Not if they're all dead! Frozen!"

Car'line could not say they were not, for the ribbon-strings of her hood were in her mouth while she was

fastening her shawl around her neck. It was bitterly cold weather, and it was well to wrap warmly. In a moment more she was out of the house, with her mother looking after her from a window.

"That girl saw a good deal at Mrs. Medway's," she remarked. "I do hope it won't unsettle her. But how that old McCracken does take to her! He just watches to see if she wants anything."

He was hard at work now on a job of her setting, and it had turned into something like his accustomed work underground. He had been compelled to bring a sled from the barn and haul out load after load of snow as he burrowed on into that immense snowbank.

All over the country, in railway cuts and the like, other men were doing the same. One railway company boasted that it had twenty thousand men at work digging down to find the road it used to have before the blizzard came.

"Why, Mr. McCracken," exclaimed Car'line as she walked along in the tunnel, "how warm it is!"

"Aye, lassie," he said, chuckling in the way he always did when answering her, "it's a' so doon a mine. Na cowld there to speak o'. Doon deep it's warrum.

Th' inspector towld me o' a siller mine that gangs doon to where the bottom rock is only a griddle ower th' lava-fire, an' water hets to boilin'. I'd na worruk so nigh th' het place. If you bruk through you'd no coom oop."

There was a kind of beauty in that white gallery, and Car'line stood still, staring around her, while the old miner hauled out the sled-load he had just heaped up. Right before her was the pallid wall he was next to shovel into, and beyond that, somewhere, were the friends she wished to see.

"Oh, I hope they're not hurt!" she exclaimed aloud, and somewhat loudly "Ho! Ho! Who?" seemed to come indistinctly back to her from the depths of the snowbank. It was a weird, uncanny sound, that made her shudder, and she shouted to the old miner:

"Mr. McCracken! Hurry! There's somebody in there under the snow! I can hear him call!"

"Oh, Laird!" exclaimed McCracken. "Some poor sowl buried by th' blizzard? I'll dig noo. I'm glad I kem to this. Ho! Mon! Dinna ye gie it oop! We're comin'!"

He began to ply his snow shovel with tremendous vigor, for now he also could hear strange outcries, and with them what seemed to be words of human speech.

"Hark, lassie!" he said. "They's more than wan o' them. It's awfu'!"

He was right. More than one shovel had been cutting into the few feet that remained at the end of that tunnel, and the next moment he stepped back suddenly, for the snow was flying before his very face.

"Yip! Wow! Yik! Woof! Yip! Wough!" That was apparently the language they were listening to; but the first thing they saw with their eyes was a paw—another—a nose—a snowy head—and then Mr. Rathburn's setter Bob, closely followed by Jim, came plunging through, breaking into a duet of triumphant barking and yelping as they danced around and inquired after their still missing master.

"Andy? Are you there?"

"Oh, Car'line! We dug—and dug—and we thought we'd never get through! How are all your folks?"

The joining of the snow tunnels.

"We're all well, except the big sycamore's blown down and the roof o' the hay barn's carried away. How's your mother and——"

"Oh, we're all right. And there's more snow! But I pulled my boat away up the day before this came, and I wanted to take Mr. Rathburn his books. The creek's away up, and I guess the pond's fuller than it ever was before."

All that had been tumbling around in Andy's mind, and it came out at the first opportunity. Questions and answers followed each other rapidly, while Smith and McCracken toiled away at the remaining snow in the tunnel. As for the dogs, they had not lingered there, but were already pawing and whining at the door of the Van Koven house.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven from within. "That's his dogs. They must ha' climbed over the drift. 'Twon't do to let 'em in. They'd rush right up to his room pell-mell."

"Woof! Woof! Yip!" responded the setters with one accord, but their very eagerness kept the door closed against them.

"Noo, lassie," said McCracken, "Smith and I'll

gang to th' path to th' toon. We're no needed here. You and th' laddie can do as ye please."

"I want to see his folks," said Car'line, "so I can tell mother."

"And I'll go right back after the books," added Andy. "Come on, Car'line, I want to show you the creek. It's high."

"All right!" declared Smith. "What I want is a look at the village. I'd like to know if it's there."

"We'll find it, mon," said the old miner. "There's na bank like this 'twixt our place and th' toon. Coom alang."

Away they went, while Car'line and Andy hurried through the Craik end of the tunnel, admiring it as they went and exchanging accounts of their experiences.

"Froze to death and snowed under, was you?" exclaimed Andy at that point of Car'line's narrative. "Well, father said he guessed your house had been blown to pieces, and we were feeling dreadfully, but mother, she's never disturbed much. She said there'd been high winds before this."

Mr. Craik was out on the piazza when they got there, ready to shout back into the house:

"Hey! Mother! Here's Car'line! She's broke through somehow. We must send 'em all the help we can. I s'pose there can't be much left o' their place.—Car'line! Come in! My wife'll be ready to come right down to your house. How about Rathburn? It must ha' been rough on him."

By that time Car'line was near enough to answer, but she told her story to Mrs. Craik rather than to her husband, for that good woman was now smiling in the doorway.

"I'm so glad to get here!" was the wind-up on Car'line's part. "But I must hurry back and tell mother——"

"Not till you've seen the creek," interposed Andy. "It's up into the barnyard now. I've got the books right here. Come on. It's all ice, too."

There was something really interesting in the sheet of ice among the leafless apple trees on the low bank of the Liffenkill. There was also a great roaring of angry water to be heard as the swollen torrent struggled with its white fetters and threatened to break them. Car'line remarked:

"There's your boat, but it's frozen in. You couldn't pull it up any farther."

"'Twont be swept away," replied Andy. "I've put a rope on it, too. There'll be a freshet when the snow melts, and a loose boat would go a-kiting."

"How it does roar!" exclaimed Car'line. "But Mr. Rathburn can't read his books—not for ever so long. He doesn't want 'em."

"I don't, then," replied Andy, "and I'm afraid father'll take a notion I must read 'em. Some of 'em are on mines, and geology, and all that kind of stuff, and some are just guide-books. Steamboats, and railroads, and all over the world, where you don't care a cent what there is there. I looked at 'em. Who wants to know what the tickets'll cost if he isn't going?"

"Bring 'em along," exclaimed Car'line. "They'll be safe at our house anyway, and I'd like to see 'em. Come! Mother's just wild to hear from your mother and your father."

CHAPTER XV.

ANDY'S PRIZE.

THE great storm was not really over until Mrs. Craik had talked about it with Mrs. Van Koven. That was the end of it, and Mrs. Craik was justified in remarking:

"Malvina Van Koven! this winter has set in at last."

"I should say it had," thoughtfully responded Mrs. Van Koven, "but we never had anything just like it, and there's no telling what'll happen before it gets away."

"I want to see Rathburn before I go," said Mrs. Craik. "Glad nothing happened to him. Andy and the dogs are great friends——"

"Oh, those dogs!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven. "I hope they didn't get up there. I thought they went out to the barn with Andy and Car'line. We must go right up."

Upstairs they went, but Bob and Jim had not gone to investigate the poultry and the roofless barn. No sooner had an unguarded outer door given them an opportunity than they were exploring that house as if they were bird-hunting. They did not say why they avoided the parlor, where they heard the two women talking, but the other rooms on that floor were finished in a twinkling and they slipped noiselessly up to the second floor. That, too, was searched, and they both lay down, whimpering, before a door that they found shut.

"He's in there," they said, glancing at each other and at the door and at the head of the stairs, up which somebody might come to let them in to see their master.

Bob arose once and scratched for a moment at the door-sill, not noisily; but he lay down again and his nose was resting on the sill when Car'line, followed on tiptoe by Andy, came stealthily along the passage-way. It had not taken them long to see all there was to see at the barns, and Andy was anxious to deliver the books. The fear of having to read them was very strong upon him, and his father had already said something about it.

"Ur-r-r-woof," remarked Bob softly, and Jim, even while wagging his tail, added: "Ur-r? Ur-r? Woof?" inquiringly.

They knew Andy well enough, but he did not belong there. As for Car'line, they were uncertain, but they arose and watched her while she carefully opened the door and peered in.

"He's asleep," she whispered; but Bob pushed past her before she could stop him, and then his fore paws were on the bed and he was studying the situation. He whined, and Jim's fringy tail drooped at once, but in an instant he was crouching on the bed at the foot, while Bob leaned away over and licked the inspector's face.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed, opening his eyes. "Are you here, boys? I'm glad to see you. How on earth did you get here?"

"It's too bad, Mr. Rathburn," exclaimed Car'line. "I don't know what to do with them."

"I brought your books," said Andy.

"Let them stay a while," said Rathburn. "They'll be quiet.—Books?"

"Guide-books and all," said Andy. "I thought

you might want to lie there and read. You won't have anything else to do. Maybe I would if I were you. I don't know."

"Not now I sha'n't," murmured the sick man a little gloomily. "Guide-books? Oh, yes! I was going to Europe pretty soon. Going to visit all the great mines. I wanted to study them. Wanted to see Europe. Can't go now.—Caroline, you can travel everywhere with those books. Take 'em and read 'em. Tell me about the storm."

Car'line did thank him, but she was dreadfully worried about Bob and Jim. Both of them looked at her favorably, and Bob took his paws down to come and smell of her hand. He allowed her to pat his head while she and Andy told about the drifts and the tunnel and whatever else they could think of. McCracken had already told him a great deal, and they had about finished the rest when Mrs. Craik and Mrs. Van Koven came in.

"Sakes alive!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven.

"Malviny, don't say a word," calmly suggested Mrs. Craik. "'Twon't hurt him.—Andy, take the dogs downstairs."

"Ur-r-r-woof!" responded Bob with some sternness of manner; but he at once sidled closely up to Car'line, as if accepting her as his friend for the occasion.

"Ur-r-r," growled Jim on the bed.

"Come, Jim," said Andy. "Come down, sir! Come! Whew——" the vainest kind of whistle, for James only put his hairy head between his paws and stared at the inspector.

"They've got to go," said Mrs. Van Koven, "but I daren't touch one of 'em."

"No more would I," said Mrs. Craik, almost as if it disturbed her. But she added, very sensibly, "Let's all go, and when it's time for Car'line to feed 'em she can tole 'em downstairs with a piece of meat."

"Jim," said Car'line, "come here!"

Even Mrs. Craik turned to look at her, so sharply imperative was that order, but the setter instantly half arose, crouched forward, and slid from the bed to the floor to come and sit down by Bob.

"Lie down, sir!" said Car'line, and down they went, while Andy remarked:

"They won't mind me like that." And the inspector added, faintly:

"I mustn't talk. Let 'em stay——"

"Indeed, sir, they'll mind the lassie," came from the doorway. "I'll answer for 'em. You'll no stay, ma'am. It's a'maist time for the fever. Gang, noo, laddie. The path to the toon is open——"

"Go and do your errands then," exclaimed Mrs. Craik, and out they went.

"He can do some for me," was Mrs. Van Koven's next remark on the stairs. "I won't let Car'line go till I hear how the road is. Where is she?"

No one answered just then, but Car'line had gone to her own room with all those books, while Fergus McCracken sat down by Bob and Jim and kept watch for a while in silence. All three of them knew that something had happened to Mr. Rathburn and that they were there on guard.

An hour later Car'line came to the door and looked in, and both the setters arose and came to her like old acquaintances; but McCracken put a finger on his lip and nodded. She knew that the sick man slept and she

turned away, and Bob and Jim followed her all the way to the kitchen. The fact was that they were thirsty, and they knew she was the right woman to speak to for a drink of water.

"Car'line," exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven, coming in from the sitting-room, "the doctor's got here, and so has the railroad superintendent.—I'm so glad they mind you!"

She meant the dogs; but Car'line said:

"He's asleep, but they can go up and see him," and she meant the men visitors.

"They say he must stay here all winter," continued Mrs. Van Koven. "We must keep him till he's well. Then he's to go to Europe about the mines.—Come, see them."

"So he told me," said Car'line. "I don't want to see them——"

"Come right in," urged her mother. "I'll feel so much better. Seems to me I'm kind o' stirred up and shaken. Come——"

"Why, mother!" replied Car'line, "I don't mind it a bit. I'm not afraid of them. Of course we can take care of Mr. Rathburn."

Half a minute later she was saying the same thing to the superintendent in her straightforward, girlish way, but she told him also, firmly:

"Mr. McCracken must stay too. We can't get along without him."

The railway manager was a man of business, accustomed to control affairs. He was a big, burly fellow, with a pleasant face, and he laughed right out.

"Doctor," he said, "keep McCracken to nurse Rath as long as he's needed. Let's go up and see him. She's foreman o' this shop."

"Oh, I'm glad of it!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven. "We want him all the while, and I didn't know what to say."

"It's all right, madam," said the superintendent. "But while I'm this way I want to see that boy Andy Craik, that saved Rathburn, and the men too——"

"Why, here he is," said Car'line. "This is Andrew, and there's his mother, Mrs. Craik."

"My boy," exclaimed the burly railway manager, "glad you are here. Every minute o' my time is a minute I can't spare just now. Hold out your hand."

He was feeling in an inside pocket as he spoke, and now a small packet came out and he opened it.

"There!" he said. "As bright and brave a boy as you are ought to keep good time. You're too young to wear so much watch and chain just now, but your mother can keep it for you."

"I can," said Mrs. Craik, while Andy stared, altogether speechless, at the pretty gold timepiece he held in his hand.

He was trying desperately to say "Thank you!" or something, but this was too unexpected, and the superintendent had to help him.

"Real pluck!" he said. "I mean to keep track of you. Always be a man. Guess you will.—At school?"

"Yes, sir," said Andy, "but I'd rather run a railroad than go to college."

"His father says he must go," explained Mrs. Craik. "He'd rather dig in a mine than in a book——"

"Hey!" said the railway manager. "You get all you can out o' your books or you'll never run any railroad, nor mine either. I didn't go to college, but I wish I had. You won't know too much."

"He isn't a bit of a dunce at school," quietly sug-

gested Car'line. "He's at the head in arithmetic. What he hates is books."

"Can't say any more now," replied the superintendent.—"Come on, doctor. I must see Rath and McCracken. Then I must get away. This is a busy time for all railway men. 'Twas like pulling teeth to get here."

Bob and Jim followed him and the doctor upstairs, and they restrained their feelings only by the strong aid of McCracken, while a searching surgical examination went on.

"He will do," remarked the doctor at last. "Getting on first-rate, but it'll be a long case——"

"Ur-r-r-woof!" responded Bob, but Jim whined dolefully and tried to get away from McCracken.

"You're to stay here, Mack," said the superintendent, busying with his pocketbook and some greenbacks. "Glad you're not hurt much."

"He musn't forget that I told him not to lift anything heavy," said the doctor. "I'm not sure of him yet."

"Woof!" said Jim, but McCracken winced a little and replied:

"The heavy shovelin' is a' dune, yer honor. I'll no lift any more. 'Twas only the storrum med me gang oot. I can care for th' inspector and the lassie."

Downstairs, while that was finishing, Andy was trying to get a little accustomed to the idea of a watch and chain, but it was of no use. He had not thought it was really anything great to crawl through and help Rathburn and come out and tell about the pumping. It was all done so quickly and he had not been hurt much.

"I don't care, Car'line," he said, "I'm glad we brought all those books away from our house in time. If father heard what the superintendent said I'd have to read every one of 'em."

"You couldn't," said Car'line. "You don't know enough yet. I had to put 'em all away—almost all—except those books about going around Europe. Mrs. Medway has a lot of them. She reads 'em too. It's almost like going there."

CHAPTER XVI.

CHANGING THE HOUSE.

EVERYBODY in and about Salterville went out upon exploring expeditions, but they did not find anything wonderful. The houses and the people were there, just as they always had been, excepting the roof of Mrs. Van Koven's barn leaning against the front of the tavern. That and the news of the fall of the great sycamore gave the Van Koven place a kind of celebrity. So did the story of Andy's watch, because he had received it there and not at his father's house; but the boys could not yet quite make out how Andy had really saved Mine No. 3. The nearest they got to it was: "He went down there, anyhow, and he climbed around till he found the men or they'd all ha' been drowned. It was real plucky and they gave him a gold watch, but he can't wear it every day."

The next day was Sunday, and McCracken stayed

at home and watched with Mr. Rathburn while Mrs. Van Koven and Car'line went to church. Bob and Jim also watched, but they had learned somehow that all that was asked of them was to keep still, and it was safe to leave them in the inspector's room while the old miner went downstairs to look around.

They saw him go, and they at once posted themselves, Bob at the foot of the bed and Jim at the head, so silently that no sound prevented the low breathing of the sick man from being heard across the room. Presently it seemed to cease, and Bob's fore paws were on the coverlet in a second, that he might inquire why it was so.

Mr. Rathburn was awake, and he had lifted his head to search the room, but he remarked to Bob:

"All right, old fellow. It was only one of my dreams. I'll go there some day, now you see 'f I don't——"

"Ur-r-r," interrupted Bob, in doubt if his patient should be permitted to talk.

"But," continued the inspector, "I'd like to go through the mine I was dreaming of. All white quartz and gold. Away off yonder among the oldest lands in

the world. Who knows where they are, the mines worked thousands of years ago? All sealed up and forgotten. How they must run around underground and through the hills and mountains! Men took out the gold and the silver and the copper. Then savages came and killed the miners and destroyed the cities, and that was the end of it. Our mines go deep enough, and we've only worked 'em a few years. Some of those mines were worked for thousands. I'd like to go through them and come out again and tell what I'd found."

"Woof!" exclaimed Jim. "Ur-r-r-woof!" and then he whined, for the inspector's head fell back and he shut his eyes and seemed to have twinges of pain.

All was silent again in the sick-room, but down at the front gate Mr. Craik was remarking to McCracken:

"Well, yes, it's pretty steady cold to-day, but the sky looks snowy-like, and we may be going to have another storm. If that there snow tunnel should cave in you'd have it all to dig out again. Rathburn's wuss, did you say? Most likely his innards was hurt some. I wanted to ask him about some coal-mining

land that belongs to me. I just know there's coal in it, and iron too."

He spoke very cheerfully indeed, especially after McCracken told him how deep the drifts were in the village, and he remarked that all the meeting-houses would probably be empty.

That was where he was mistaken, for Car'line almost uttered an exclamation the moment she was inside of her church door.

"Child!" whispered Mrs. Van Koven, "they've all come to see who's here. I felt just so myself."

All were there, and at the other churches, that could leave home and come. In the middle of the village, moreover, there was a wind-swept open place where sleighs could turn around, and there, just after the morning service was over, Car'line and her mother went for a look at the roof of their barn, not expecting to meet anybody else.

"It flew like a kite," said Mrs. Van Koven, "and just look at it now!"

"Mother," exclaimed Car'line, "there's Mrs. Medway's sleigh, but she isn't in it."

She darted forward, and her mother heard her call out:

"Michael?"

"All right, miss," responded Mrs. Medway's coachman. "She told me to ask for ye. Her feet's gettin' cured fast and she's goin' to Washington day afther the railroads is open. I'll say I saw yiz."

"Tell her——" and Car'line gave him plenty to tell, but she had to give it up before she could ask any more about Mrs. Medway, for his fat horses bolted and he and they and the sleigh almost disappeared in the deep drift just beyond the tavern.

"Car'line," said her mother, "that's the last you'll see of Mrs. Medway this winter. You can't go there again."

"I don't want to go there," responded Car'line, "but, oh, how I would like to go to Washington!"

"A girl like you in Washington!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven. "But his team can't run away. All they can do with that sleigh is to pull it out."

"There's going to be a Sewing Society this week, anyhow," returned Car'line, "and everybody'll be

there, just to show that they can come. They say it's going to be the jolliest winter we ever had."

That was indeed what people said, and they gathered in the narrow lanes that were cut through the snowbanks to talk things over, for the blizzard had stirred up any amount of neighborly feeling. All the boys felt it strongly, but they were disposed to resent the conduct of Andy Craik in not wearing his new watch to church so they could have a look at it.

Up at the Van Koven house McCracken came and sat by Rathburn's bed a while, and went out and came again; but whenever he was not there the inspector seemed disposed to converse with the two setters. He had the conversation mainly to himself, and they appeared to listen while he told them the most cracking yarns about places underground and what was in them and the way to find them. His face grew flushed and his eyes grew unnaturally bright, however, and it was evident that he was telling a great deal that belonged to the waking dreams of his fever. It is said that a great many wide-awake men become feverish and a little out of their minds whenever they think too long

about the treasures which are hidden away down under the earth.

Andy was not an altogether unpopular boy that day after all. He had something to tell that was better than a sight of a new watch.

"I don't care if the pond is all snow," he told his friends. "Up by our house the creek bust out and flooded over and froze hard. There's acres of glary ice —best kind. Come up and skate. You can skate all over our barnyard."

"The creek's awful high," they admitted. "It's about the only chance left—the ice at your house—but there'll be tip-top coasting when the hill roads are broken. You can't get up hill, nor down either, just now."

Sunday went and the week days came, and still all the Liffenkill Valley was more or less tied up by the snowdrifts.

"We're kind o' shut in, Car'line," said Mrs. Van Koven. "There doesn't seem to be anything else that we can do. Mr. McCracken 'tends to all the chores."

That was so, and they did not now seem to him to include anything that he could call "work."

"I'm glad there's no liftin'," he said of it. "I'm beginning to feel more o' that twist in my shouther, an' the place in my hip where the rock hit when it fell. I didn't mind it at the outset, but it's there noo."

He told hardly anything more about his hurts, but he limped a little and was disposed to use his left arm rather than his right, except when he was doing something for Car'line. Then he didn't seem to care, but stepped right along, with a kind of light on his very rugged face.

"The lassie!" he said. "I never had ane. Oh, but she's bonnie!"

There was something also the matter with Car'line. She had not an ache or pain of any kind, but she seemed to be unable to keep still. She worked right along after all the work was done, and there was no telling why she should take hold of furniture and things in the way she did. There was no manner of reason, for instance, why she went up into the garret after there was really no more to do downstairs. She made McCracken come up and help her put together an ancient bedstead and throw over it the new feather bed, the "tick" her mother had insisted upon filling. There was no carpet

to cover the floor with, but all the trumperies in the garret were made to come out of their corners. It was a cold place, but for the current of hot air that came up the stairway; but it looked warmer after the loom and the spinning-wheels and the reel were "stood around," as she said, as if somebody were about to go to work with them. They looked comfortable and homelike, and not so much as if they had been deserted by all their families and friends.

"I'm going to put curtains on those windows," said Car'line at last. "The old Turkey-red calico is just the thing. I'll make it look warmer."

So it did, and when, one afternoon, her mother came up to see if the garret needed dusting, she exclaimed:

"Sakes alive! What has that girl been doing? She's changed the whole house downstairs, and now she's made this place look like a parlor. I do declare, I never heard of anybody waking up the way she's done. She's just a-coming out."

Whatever she may have meant by that precisely, she had not heard the comments made by observing women in the village.

"Car'line Van Koven?" they said. "You can't

tell what to make of that girl. She's so dreadful shy. She almost goes into a corner at the Societies. Mrs. Medway likes her, because she sprained her ankle at Car'line's house. That girl's got loads o' pride in her. Temper, too. Anyhow, she isn't rich and she never will be. She doesn't know nothing of the world."

Car'line had found that out, for she had spent hours and hours, day after day, over Mr. Rathburn's wonderful guide-books for tourists in Europe. They were guides for more tours than he had ever hoped to make, and they went everywhere—a great deal as he did in his dreams, visiting even out-of-the-way places that other people never really went to, but that had remarkable things in them.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TALKS ABOUT MINES.

DAY after day the fever turns were shorter, for Mr. Rathburn was getting better, but as yet he had not seen much of anybody in that house excepting the old miner and the two setters. Even Bob and Jim, however, appreciated highly the fact that it was no longer necessary to their master's recovery that they should sit by his bed all the while and growl whenever any one opened the door.

The cold weather held on tightly, having once taken so very strong a hold, and all the Liffenkill Valley old people voted it "an old-fashioned hard winter, such as we used to have." All the young people were pleased to have a winter of as high a character and as low a temperature as even their grandparents could boast of.

It was the temperature that kept Mrs. Van Koven out of the garret; but every now and then she went up there, to "see what Car'line's been doing with the

rest of those things. They look different, and as if there was more of 'em, every time I go up there. But it's as cold as a barn."

The barns were cold indeed, especially the hay barn, which had lost its roof; but the poultry, and particularly the geese, appeared to be having a pretty good time. There were not quite so many of them now, for McCracken's doctrine concerning the inspector was:

"There's nothing better'n pultry, ma'am, for building of him oop. I've thocht that he took to ducks. Hadn't I better tak' the heads off anither brace o' th' fat anes that's no layin' weel?"

It was bad for the ducks that he was pretty sure of the cordial support of Car'line; but even with her aid he obtained very few death warrants against geese or ganders.

The days were getting longer, especially in Mr. Craik's opinion, before he obtained permission to go into the sick-room and sit and talk about coal mines. Bob and Jim went with him, and they so posted themselves that he could not well have done anything to Rathburn with his sticks before they could interfere. Car'line also came, and she listened as silently as did

the setters, while Mr. Craik told how he himself and her own father had prospected in that and other neighborhoods, and how sure they were that vast deposits of black and shining riches were waiting a discoverer right down, down, down under the very house they were in.

Mr. Rathburn was now sitting up in bed, although not permitted to get out of it. He listened, politely enough, but he grew restless, and so did the dogs, until at last he remarked:

"In a mining country every man thinks he owns a mine. I found that everywhere. I don't want to find a mine. I only want to work one that somebody else has found. There are too many mines now. Half of 'em don't pay. The gold mines are the worst pay of all."

"Coal's better'n gold," said Mr. Craik. "I only wanted to know what you'd say about it. Mining's risky business anyhow. It kills about so many men every year. If a man's a miner he's pretty sure to be killed some day. Most of 'em get buried alive, unless it's a fire and they're burnt to death. I'd rather be killed by an explosion if I was a miner."

"Woof! Ur-r-r!" remarked Bob a little indig-

nantly, for Rathburn could now stir around pretty freely, and he gave more signs of unrest just then.

"They're right, mon," said McCracken. "I'll no let him claver any more. Ye maun coom anither day, Mr. Craik. But ye're a grewsome auld carle, and if ye get a mine I troost ye'll work in it. I'd not, then, for the bad luck your talk wud bring. Coom alang."

Every now and then, among those lengthening winter days, a curious idea came of its own accord into the busy brain of Car'line. There was not much room for it, there were so many other ideas, most of them new; but this one seemed to say to her that all the world she was reading about in those guide-books was very much like a mine, and that she was digging into it and finding curious things of all sorts. Perhaps the blizzard and its consequences belonged to them. She could not help thinking, pretty frequently, of Mrs. Medway and of the time she must be having at the national capital, with so many great men all around to see and to talk with.

"I don't believe she will dance much this winter," thought Car'line, "but I've had more sleighrides than

I ever had before, and Andy says he never had so much skating. It's right back of his own house."

Such a winter! But it began so late that the cold-snap part of it was not long, after all.

There came a clear and brilliant evening when there were more stars than usual, and they even had a smiling look, as if there might be some warmth in them. Car'-line went out upon the stoop to look up, they were so splendid, and the dreamy expression that was on her face so often nowadays grew deep and wistful as her eyes wandered among the shining pathways of the heavenly host.

"They are so beautiful!" she said.

"Hech! Lassie!" exclaimed the old Scotch miner from the doorway behind her. "You've na your hood on. I've brocht the bit shawl. Pit it ower your head."

She took the shawl, but she answered:

"Why, Mr. McCracken, it's not so cold to-night."

"Indeed no," he said. "Dinna you hear the drop-pin' frae the hoose-eaves? The frost is bruk. But ane thing ye'll be glad to hear. The doctor says th' in-spector may walk i' th' room the morrow. A' day he's

been smilin' an' talkin' o' Europe. You'll na claver wi' him ony more, sune, aboot the mines and the auld coontries."

"Woof!" growled Bob at her side, but he was remarking about a man that was passing.

"I'll be so glad," she said, "to see him walk again!" But then for the first time she was aware how many talks, or "clavers," she had had of late with the convalescent inspector.

Now that he was so nearly well, he had been taken by McCracken daily for a long "sit up" by the window, and there he had read, and talked with visitors and with Andy and Bob and Jim; but Car'line came also, and it had become one of those customary things that people miss when they are taken away.

"Then he'll be going," she added.

"Aye, lassie," replied the miner. "But first of a', the snawdrifts'll be ganging. They can widen th' road to Craik's and cut anither length oot o' the tree trunk. It's been hard on th' owld mon to come thra' th' toonn'l wi' his sticks."

He laughed heartily as he said that, for he and Mr. Craik had not seemed to agree very well, and he was

sure to grumble whenever he saw his queer neighbor working his way to the house.

"There's na luck in him," he said, "wi' his grewsome yarns. He afttimes mak's my bluid rin ca'ald."

He turned and went into the house now, and Car'line lingered to look at the stars and to listen to the drip, drip, drip from the eaves, and to think what an immense amount of snow there was and how long it would take it to thaw out and run away.

Andy Craik was in a discontented frame of mind at about that hour. He and some of his friends from the village were out upon the ice, and they were making unpleasant discoveries.

"Do you see that?" he exclaimed almost the first thing after putting on his skates. "It cuts in. If there's a thaw coming it'll spoil it all."

"That'd be awful!" came back from more than one of the others as they pulled their straps another hole tighter. "There ought not to be a thaw for weeks and weeks."

"But then," remarked Andy, "it isn't any one thaw can bust this ice."

Little he knew of what a thaw could do if it set

about it. His father and mother, over between the hen-coop and the house, were discussing the matter with more knowledge.

"The brown hen's back again," said Mr. Craik. "She didn't get away far this time. She's five chicks left, and that's pretty well for such a winter as this has been. But it's going now——"

"Glad it is," said his wife in her usual quiet way of agreeing to things as they came. "We're almost out of wood."

"Smith has cut down the oldest apple tree," responded Mr. Craik, "but that won't last long. If there's a thaw it'll bring a flood. Sweep everything. Then it'll freeze again, and it may hold on till April. No early plowin' this year. The bitterest weather always comes in the second freeze—after a thaw and a freshet have broken up everything."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ESCAPE OF THE PIGS.

"SPLENDID sunshine, Mack!" exclaimed Mr. Rathburn at the open window. "Here I am. I'm sound again. There wasn't a twinge——"

"An' wi' no help frae me!" replied the old miner emphatically.

A night had passed, and this was in an early hour of a day that felt as if it had been clipped from June and grafted into the end of February. The sun poured down with power, and all the faces of the snowdrifts were shrinking away as if they refused to be looked upon so steadily.

"Now, Mack——" but there were two other friends who had walked across the room with the inspector from his bed to the window, watching his slow steps and whining anxiously. Now they seemed to understand that all was well, and while Bob capered around his

master in manifest exultation, Jim put his fore paws upon the window sill and barked vociferously, to let the outer world know that his master could walk without crutches once more.

"Morning! I thought I'd come over before the snow got soft. It's hard yet in the road, but it's going fast up and down the valley."

"Good-morning, Mr. Craik," gayly responded the inspector. "I'm on my pins again. Hurrah!"

"Don't use your leg too soon," suggested Mr. Craik kindly. "If you should have another break in that bone it might have to be amputated. I s'pose the broken rib doesn't hinder your breath as it did?"

"Gone long ago," said Mr. Rathburn as Mr. Craik worked his sticks across the floor; but some of the sunshine at the window appeared to hold back and not come in as freely as it did.

Mr. Craik had come for a talk about coal mines in the Liffenkill Valley, but the inspector was thinking of other mines, in other parts of the world, and one of his first responses, after McCracken was followed downstairs by the setters, was:

"No, Mr. Craik, I shall not be here in the spring.

I hope to be studying the shafts and tunnels of the Old World. I can safely travel, even if I can't go back to regular duty. England——"

"Exactly," interrupted Mr. Craik. "I know. The English coal is a'most used up. All going. Can't last much longer. There's nothing but starvation and ruin ahead of 'em."

"They'll last a good while yet," half laughed Mr. Rathburn. "The thing to go first is all this snow——"

"It's going," said Mr. Craik. "The slush'll be a foot deep by noon."

He was not so far wrong; but the treasures of the blizzard were turning into something besides slush. Down at the kitchen door Mrs. Van Koven heard the old miner call out:

"This way, lassie. Coom and look at th' burn. Coom to the brig. Saw ye ever the like o' that?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Car'line, stepping out upon the bridge over what had been the rivulet across the garden. "It's almost bank full! Will it come any higher?"

"'Deed an' it wull," said he, a little seriously. "There's a rush o' water beginning to pour ower the hill. A thousan' times that'll be down th' mountain

sides. I'll gang tell th' inspector, 'n then I'll gang oot an' see what's coom to th' Liffenkill. It's no canny, th' sudden flood, an' the sun's a blazin' hot. I'm glad the barns an' th' kye are on higher ground."

"I'll go and tell mother," said Car'line. "The water rises while you look at it."

In spite of the gentle knoll it stood on, and the low, bush-grown rampart along the bank of the creek, the house was really upon low ground, very little above the ordinary spring level of the rushing Liffenkill. Nearly all of Salterville was a number of feet more elevated.

"I'll go out in front first," thought Car'line, and she went through the house to the gate with a sudden feeling of anxiety that was increasing at every step.

Mrs. Van Koven was there already, and the first thing Car'line heard was:

"Andy! You don't say so!"

"Yes, I do, Mrs. Van Koven," said Andy eagerly. "I'm going to the village a-kiting to get some things. But the creek has h'isted the ice a foot, and there's a freshet a-coming down the road. If it gets to running through the cut between those drifts I couldn't get my sled through."

"Run, Andy!" shouted Car'line. "Mother, Mr. McCracken says it's going to be a flood."

"Child!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven. "I wish everything in the house was up in the garret!"

"I wish it was," said Car'line, "but I'm going to begin right away."

"I'll take up the parlor carpet," responded her mother. "The first water that came would spoil that. It's the only good carpet in the house."

Old Mr. Craik sat still upstairs and tried to get an assurance from Mr. Rathburn that there must be a coal mine under his farm, but up at the Craik homestead the aspect of affairs was beginning to look threatening.

"I'm glad Mr. Craik isn't here!" exclaimed his wife. "He couldn't do one thing to help."

That meant that he would be in the way; but Smith, the hired man, was already obeying instructions that hardly seemed to be called for yet by the situation. Four cows and as many horses were in the road in front of the house, one team of horses being harnessed to a woodsled, and the other to a large old family sleigh. The cows were already started toward the "cut," which Andy had spoken of, where the first snow tunnel had

been made through the great drift. Half the time that cut was still spoken of as "the tunnel," and it was barely wide enough for a team to pass.

In the rear of the house there was a sight worth seeing, for the lifted ice had been driven to the garden fence and the water was forcing its way beyond the first row of currant bushes. The pigpen had been thrown open, and several fat porkers, younger and older, stood up to their knees in ice water, loudly declaring their entire astonishment at the conduct of the Liffenkill Creek.

"If I could get them into the road!" exclaimed Mrs. Craik. "I ain't going to get worried—not yet—but if the snow keeps on melting in this way there's no telling what'll happen. Anyhow, I'll put everything I can into the sleighs and send it off."

Smith helped her, vigorously, and they were pretty well loaded with an altogether miscellaneous cargo.

"You go now," said Mrs. Craik. "Get the cows safe and come right back. Some things'll get wet, best we can do."

There is not much sense in a pig, but one old grunter had enough to induce him to seek dry land. All the

rest followed him, but the first attempt they made to "root" convinced them that they had not yet reached Mr. Craik's garden. They could see the cows, however, and if these were on their way to any garden, it was a pig's duty to go along. Loud was the squealing and grunting which discussed that idea. It was associated, also, with a new sense of freedom. No pig-pen, no imprisonment—all the world was before them, and so they followed the cows. They were a good deal in the way of the horses when these set out, but Smith remarked:

"If a hog thinks he's running away, he'll go, but if he gets a notion that you're drivin' him, he won't stir a peg. Let 'em rip!"

They may have believed he was trying to head them off, for they at once began to move faster, and when they reached the open gate of the Van Koven place they even rushed in ahead of the cows. There might be somebody there disposed to keep them out, and they were complete pigs, ready to meet just that kind of person.

"Aye, mon!" shouted McCracken, as he saw Smith in the wood-sleigh, the other team following without

a driver. "Gang on across the brig, ower the burn. I'll tak' alang the ither team for ye. Dinna hold oop till ye're beyont the hay barn. If warst cooms to warst, we can drive the nags and the kye ower the hill. A' our ain are safe, but it's odd the water does na' rin out ower the dam."

"The dam's plugged," replied Smith. "I saw it yesterday. Heaped with ice and snow. If the hole in the middle fills up, there'll be the wickedest kind of a setback. Flood this narrer upper end o' the valley, up to the railway embankment. Just one big pond."

"That's the vara thing that's doing, I've a mind," said the old miner. "There'll na gret harrum be dune. —But look at they swine, ganging across the brig, as if they had soond sense!"

Squealing at one another and at the little torrent above and below, Mr. Craik's pigs pushed along until the last of them paused at the door of the goose house, and tried vainly to root it open.

"Na, na," said McCracken. "Ye'll gang farther and fare waur;" but Smith remarked:

"Tell you what, I'll put these sleighs under the shed away up yonder. Then I'll take that light cutter

and a horse and go back after Mrs. Craik. The old man's here now."

"He'd better stay, I'm thinking," said McCracken. "Gang on. I've plenty o' jobs o' my ain just noo."

Out at the road gate stood Car'line, and she looked anxiously up and down the valley before she said:

"Who would have thought there were so many things in those parlor closets! I'm all out of breath."

There was not anything new to be seen here, and the sun was shining gloriously. His light fell on the white ridges of the mountains and made them beautiful, and the soft wind that fanned Car'line's cheeks was warm and springlike. How could anything but good to all of them come with a day so splendid, so peaceful?

So it seemed to Car'line, for with it all came the languor, the lassitude that arrives with the sudden departure of the strong and binding frost.

She heard the sound of sticks behind her, and with them came her mother's voice:

"Now, Mr. Craik, I'm going to have Sarah come right here. We've plenty of room. Your cows and horses and pigs are all out at our barn.—Look at the

road. You can't get home.—There goes Smith with our cutter. He's going to bring her."

"Smith!" shouted Mr. Craik. "Don't forget that hen! If there's really going to be a freshet—I declare! He's gone!"

The hired man had acted promptly, and he was well accustomed to Mr. Craik's directions—cords of them. He drove away up the road like a man in a hurry and Mr. Craik continued:

"Malviny, you and Car'line are safe enough, but think of what's going on all over the country. If some of the great rivers are going to rise like our creek, there'll be whole cities washed away. Some o' the western states are only a few feet above the water line at any time. They have to build levees to keep it out. They were formerly under water, and the original state of things might be restored at any time. Think of millions and millions of people drowning, and no chance to get away——"

"Oh, stop!" said Mrs. Van Koven. "They can all go upstairs. Water never rises only about so high."

They all went back into the house, at all events, and it was not long before Smith and his cutter re-

turned, bringing Mrs. Craik, all placid and smiling, and as much more cargo of "all sorts" as that cutter would hold.

"I wish I knew what's become of that hen," remarked Mr. Craik.

"The old brown?" replied his wife. "She and her chickens are in the woodbox. I put it out the door and put them in to bring 'em, but there wasn't room. She'll have to sit still till we can send for her."

Whether or not proper care had been taken for the well-being of the old brownie and her family, one other important person had been forgotten, temporarily, and Andy had reached home with his sled load of groceries and things to find himself the only human being in the house.

"Bully!" he exclaimed, as he looked hurriedly around and comprehended the state of affairs. "Mother's cut it for Mrs. Van Koven's. They've took the horses and cows. Pigs, too. The hens are up in the hayloft.—Cracky! how the water is coming up."

His brave young face clouded nevertheless, for there was an increasing sound in his ears, and it seemed to come from up the valley.

"Guess it's the Liffenkill," he said. "But it isn't running very fast right here. It's only rising.—If it hasn't thawed my boat loose and floated her!"

That was a fact and the tight little punt was drifting around the yard, at the end of the long rope that fastened her to an apple tree."

"I've got to get her," he exclaimed, "but it'll be awful cold wading."

He went into the kitchen, heedless of the inquiring clucking of the brown hen in the woodbox by the door. Off came his shoes and stockings, his trowsers were rolled up quickly, and then it was:

"Oh!—Ooh! Cold? I guess it is cold. I'll go it and get back. Yah!"

It took real pluck, but the boat rocked to and fro and seemed to be beckoning him. He reached the apple tree in such a shiver that he could hardly untie the knot.

"Gimminy! I've got her, but I'll have to wade back. The oars are at the house. I wouldn't like to have even the biggest kind of flood without a boat to go around in. Oo-oogh!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CRASH AT THE BRIDGE.

"CAR'LINE!"

"What is it, mother? I just came downstairs."

"What on earth have we been in such a hurry for? Maybe there isn't going to be much of a freshet, after all."

"Why, mother," said Car'line, "I don't know, but Mr. Rathburn was speaking to Mr. McCracken about the railway bridge over the Liffenkill. He said he told the company it isn't safe, and now he's worrying about it."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven, "that's dreadful!"

"It's just what happens all the while," croaked a solemn voice from near the sitting-room stove. "When a bridge goes down with a train load of passengers there's nothing can save 'em. Some of 'em would be

crushed, of course, but most of 'em would be drowned. Unless the cars caught fire when the stoves upset——"

"Johnny Craik!" interrupted Mrs. Van Koven. "Don't speak of it!"

"But, mother," said Car'line, "they couldn't be burned up under water."

"Everything burns that's above the water line," explained Mr. Craik. "The sun's going down now, and whatever is going to happen 'll happen in the dark."

"Dismal" was hardly the word for the way they were all looking and feeling just then, but Car'line slipped out into the kitchen as if she had heard somebody calling.

"Lassie," whispered the old miner, as he came a few steps to meet her, "tak' anither look at the burn!"

He held the outer door open and she looked, but it almost frightened her.

"It's pouring over the bridge!" she exclaimed. "It'll be swept away."

"It's ganging noo," replied McCracken. "Smith's awa' beyont and he'll no coom back. He's safe, but I med him do some worruk a bringin' wood and coal. We're gaun to be flooded in, lassie, and I'm carryin'

fuel oopstairs. Glad am I there's grates in they rooms, but we canna warrum the garret."

"Yes, we can," said Car'line. "There's an old sheet-iron wood stove up there, and some pipe, and there's a pipe hole in the chimney."

"You may tell them noo," said McCracken, again glancing through the window toward the barns. "There gangs part o' the brig! They planks were no' spiked doon.—I milked the Craik coos and our ain. It's a' in the pails and pans, and I'm thinking we'll need it."

Car'line took one look into the milkroom and then she walked back to the sitting room to tell the news.

Not a word answered her for a moment, but then it was Mrs. Craik who remarked:

"I'm so glad he milked the cows."

"I want to see how the road is," exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven. "What fools we've been not to go right away to the village!"

McCracken had followed Car'line, and he replied to her mother:

"'Twas too late an hour agane, ma'am. I thocht o' it an' went to see, an' I saw the burn pourin' ower

the stane brig that's betwixt this an' the toon. It's deep water i' th' hollows."

Mrs. Van Koven had hurried to the front door even while he was speaking, but all things looked very late when she swung it open. The sun which had been so brilliant had disappeared behind a black bank of clouds, and all over the valley a yellowish fog was stealing, so that the creek was hidden, but there was water in the road up to the very gate.

"It might take weeks for such a flood to go down," suggested Mr. Craik, but his wife had suddenly lost her calmness.

"Andrew! Andrew!" she exclaimed, piteously. "My boy! He is up at the house! All alone!"

"Unless the flood kept him at the toon, ma'am," said McCracken. "He'd be safer there than here. It's no' likely he's at the hoose."

"Oh! I hope it's so!" shuddered his mother. "Think of him there all alone, and the water rising, and it's a'most dark. God help him!"

Even Mr. Craik was silent for once. He could not think of anything really gloomier than the idea of his boy hemmed in at night by the swelling waters of the

Liffenkill. He was perfectly willing, however, to accept the arguments which were offered in favor of Andy being safe in Salterville, and pretty soon he began to work his way upstairs to the back room, where a fine fire in the grate promised as much comfort as was to be had.

The darkness came down rapidly, aided by the increasing fog, and the bank of black clouds in the west climbed steadily, stooping and reaching out as it climbed, as if it had a heavy load of some sort and was looking for the right spot to pitch it down on.

Miles northerly, along the rugged footcrags of the mountains, the long, winding line of the railway lay still in the shadows, but from far to the eastward came swiftly on a great, fire-red eye and a roar of rolling wheels. The headlight of the locomotive could not penetrate the fog to any great distance along the track, and the conductor of the train had already signaled the engineer to "slow up" a little, for he had heard something concerning the Liffenkill bridge and the melting mountain snows.

It was much as if he had signaled at the same time to the clouds that were sweeping above him, for they

stooped lower toward his train, and suddenly hurled upon it a torrent of warm rain, part of the load with which they were about to drench and shrivel all the Broken Ridge snowbanks.

It was an express, passenger train, with two baggage cars forward, and away back behind the rest were palace sleeping cars, in which all the passengers were still up and dressed. Whatever else most of them had been talking about at the moment when the rain began to rattle against the windows and on the car-roofs so sonorously, the next remarks made all around had more or less reference to blizzards, and snows, and meltings, and to sundry reports in that day's newspapers concerning swollen rivers, railway washouts, and the like.

"Mrs. Medway!" exclaimed one woman to another, "why didn't we wait a few days? I'm afraid we can't get from the station to Salterville, or to your house or to mine."

"Michael will be there with my carriage, whether yours comes or not," replied Mrs. Medway.—"Why, Mrs. Spruance, the hood of my carriage'll keep out anything.—What's the matter with the train? Oh! what are they stopping for?"

"What can have happened?" said Mrs. Spruance, nervously. "I get so scared if anything goes wrong. Oh! hear that rain!—Have we run into anything? Dear me!"

There was a running fire of questions without answers all over that elegant palace car, one short, rosy-faced dame going so far as to declare:

"I'm so glad it didn't happen after we were all asleep!"

"Humph!" said sensible Mrs. Medway. "Nothing has happened yet, but if it's a collision, the baggage cars are smashed first.—Dear me! and there's my big trunk and all the things in it!"

"Better your trunk than yourself, madame," remarked a gentleman sitting near them. "There—we are moving again. Hi! hullo! What——"

That car ran against the one in front of it with a great bang. He had risen as he spoke, and now the shock threw him violently forward, flat upon the floor. Half the seats around him were emptied in a second, but Mrs. Medway had been comfortably leaning back, and all she did was to slide forward, not ungracefully, and sit down, exclaiming, as she did so:

"Jane Spruance! we've struck! That's what I was always afraid of on board a steamer!"

She had hit it exactly, only there was a great deal more. The middle pier of the Liffenkill bridge, reported unsafe by Inspector Rathburn, had held up with all its might against the flood. Trunks of trees and cakes of ice had been hurled against it by the rushing waters and it had persistently fended them off, but it had been getting tired. It was older and weaker than the railway company had been willing to believe. Even now it held up under the locomotive long enough for that to pass, but it had been tottering and crumbling every second of time, and the baggage cars were like a last blow that knocked it down.

Crash! clang! bang! one upon another and down upon the rocks and ice below, smashed and splintered, the baggage cars, breaking their couplings with the locomotive in front and with the smoking car behind, as if the iron loops had been made of wood.

The bridge was gone, and a great angry roar of the freshet answered the cries and shouts that followed the lost cars.

"Thank God!" exclaimed the conductor. "But I

wish I were sure none o' the men were in those cars. If we'd been going at speed, 'twould ha' been ruin!"

There were screams in the passenger cars. Not anybody had been seriously injured, but there were many rude bruises and there was a vast amount of fright. The force of the shock was greater at the front, of course, and the smokers fared worst. Away back in the palace car there was not much more than a "general consternation," and a great deal of anxiety as to what was coming next.

"There isn't anything coming next," said Mrs. Medway bravely. "The train has stopped."

She was not completely correct, however, for a brakeman came hurrying all the way through, shouting out exactly what had happened and telling everybody to keep still. He would not pause to answer questions, however, for he carried with him two large red "signal lanterns." They were "danger lights." One was to be hung on the end of the train, and he was to carry the other, through the storm, to a place where it might warn the next train behind them.

"The baggage cars went down into the freshet!

All splintered up!" exclaimed Mrs. Spruance.—"My autograph album was in my trunk!"

"Pretty much everything was in mine," responded Mrs. Medway dolefully. "All the dresses I wore in Europe, and the things I bought at Jerusalem two years ago.—What shall we do? Besides, how are we all ever going to get home? We can't sit here till they build a new bridge."

"Madame," said the same gentleman who had spoken before, "I am willing to sit here till it stops raining. My umbrella is in the forward baggage car."

"It's in the Liffenkill," remarked Mrs. Medway. "So is my sealskin sack."

"They will come," he said, "and pull us back, and send us around by other roads somehow. I am on my way to Chicago and I don't care how I get there."

They had nothing to do but to wait and listen to the noise made by the cataract which the clouds were unloading upon the roof of that car, but it was even worse for poor Andy Craik alone in his house. That was no longer on the bank of the Liffenkill, for the creek had risen all around it. He did not say why he had lighted all the lamps and every candle he could

find a stick for, but they were a kind of company, and those in the kitchen windows enabled him to watch his boat and the rising flood.

"She's floating," he said to himself.—"It's up to the steps. Soon as it's high enough I'll pull her right into the house. She's pretty well packed now, but I can put in some more. It'll all get wet, but we can dry 'em. Mother took away loads o' things, but I've got her other shawl and father's pipes.—Hear that cat yowl! She can't get out o' the old teacaddy.—It's over the steps.—Oh! how it does rain! Every drop'd fill a bucket. If this keeps on we'd better ha' had an ark ready, like Noah's. There won't be any animals in my ark but one cat. He had all sorts, and how he got some of 'em into the coop I don't know."

Andy was very thoughtful just at this time, but he again and again expressed his pleasure at the absence of his father and mother, adding:

"They needn't be worried about me. They know I've the boat right here."

He could not guess how great a help it had been to his mother to have Fergus McCracken prove that Andy could not have left Salterville. The old miner

did not actually say it was so, for he was a truthful man, but he remarked to Car'line by themselves:

"Ach, lassie! She's his mither. She'd no sleep for sorrow if she thocht the lad was there. Gie her the coomfort."

"But is he there?" asked Car'line.

"The Laird keep him wherever he is!" replied McCracken. "Ye'd best not know any more'n you do know. We'll gang on wi' a' these things oopstairs."

That was what they were doing all the while. The milk-room itself was nearly empty. There seemed hardly anything more to be done indeed at the moment when Mrs. Van Koven herself, in the kitchen, screamed aloud.

"It's come!" she shouted. "It's pouring in over the floor! O Car'line! run upstairs!"

"Why, mother," replied Car'line, "we knew it was coming. Don't be so scared."

"It's naething at a', ma'am," added the old miner. "We're a' ready. But, 'pon me shoul, it's coom sudden. It's a burst somewhere i' th' mountains."

There had been snow dams away up among the ridges, with little lakes of snow water behind them. As

these reservoirs were let loose, the flood in the valley would needs make sudden rises.

The worst of the mischief that night was done by the logs and the ice cakes that lodged upon the dam below Salterville, piling it up yards higher than usual, so that all the narrow valley above became part of the mill pond. The houses in the lower part of the village had long since been abandoned, but boats were still plying to and fro in spite of the rain.

"Car'line!" said Mrs. Van Koven, half way up the stairs. "This is dreadful! What if we should be swept away!"

"Come up, mother, do," said Car'line. "The house'll stay just where it is."

"I've been thinking," said Mr. Craik. "I s'pose it'll go, but we can stop it at the dam. If it goes over the dam!—O! Oom!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE VOYAGE OF THE BROWN HEN.

"I do declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Koven. "Car'line's done it. We did just need another room. She and I can sleep up here.—But, oh! that rain on the roof! It hammers as if it meant to come through."

When she had started upstairs she had not stopped anywhere until she reached the garret, as if the higher she climbed the safer she would be from the terrible water which was taking possession of the lower floor of her house.

A surprise had been prepared for her. Not only was the old bedstead in fine condition—feather-bed and all—but the sheet-iron stove had been set up and a wood fire was blazing in it, so that there was no chill in that garret. Nevertheless it was a kind of great hollow drum for the storm to beat upon.

"Why, mother," said Car'line, "it wasn't anything

at all to do. Mr. McCracken put up the stove. We shall be away above all the water."

"If the house'll stand," groaned her mother. "I wish Mr. Craik wouldn't say another word about it. —I wish it were morning.—There! That was thunder! Thunder at this time o' year! It's awful!"

Car'line was silent, for it was awful; but there was a very steady, courageous look upon her bright young face. It was the look McCracken had noticed when he said of her:

"Ay! the lassie! The bonnie face o' her! She's braw an' she's true, an' the good Laird keep her frae a' harrum. There's many a tall mon that's cowerin' the nicht, an' that bit o' a black-haired lass hasna' th' first tremor o' fear."

She did not seem to have, but it was not easy for her to stand still. She felt altogether better as long as she was doing something.

Perhaps it was for a similar reason that the imprisoned inspector on the second floor was feeling so badly. He had reports from McCracken of the general situation, but there was nothing whatever that he could be permitted to do, and he was irritated, almost

angry. He could see nothing from his windows. He had, most of the time, no one to talk to. Bob and Jim stuck closely to him, but every now and then one of them would lift his head and only half suppress a howl.

"Bob," said Rathburn, in reply to one of these howls, "you shut up! What do you know about floods? —I wish I knew how it is with the Liffenkill bridge."

He could now have learned something if he had been there, for on either side of the great yawning gap, where the bridge had been, were standing men with lanterns, trying to cast in light enough to answer the question, "What has become of those two cars?"

They could see hardly anything but the foaming blackness of the whirling water. In the middle was a half-covered mass of masonry, the remnant of the central pier, and it had been upon this that one of the two cars had struck, breaking in twain to distribute its contents at once, while the other car had remained nearly entire, jammed rather than landed against rocks below which had once been high above the channel of the creek.

"Pretty much busted," remarked the conductor.

"I don't know which car the two flagmen were in. All the baggage in the rear car has gone down stream."

"It hasn't gone far," said another man, standing by him. "It'll all be there on the bottom when the freshet goes down."

"It'll be somewhere down the valley," said the conductor. "Let's go in. We can't do anything but wait for the rescue train to get here."

That was the word that went all through from car to car, and there was really nothing terrible about it. Mrs. Medway and Mrs. Spruance were only specimens, however, for every soul on board was, like them, in trouble of mind concerning the baggage which had tumbled into the gulf when the bridge went down.

So far as the general effect of the storm was concerned, the Van Koven and Craik homesteads were a good deal as if they had been other cars of that train. Nothing but some utter darkness separated them, and all the people in the cars or in the houses were feeling as much alike as if they had been members of the same family sitting in different rooms.

That is, all but Andy Craik. He had already sat down or walked around in every room of his house, and

he was now sitting in his boat as it floated in more than two feet deep of water at the foot of the stairs. A lantern sat beside him and a hand lamp occupied the front seat. There seemed to be a great deal of cargo, and out of the middle of it came every now and then a long-drawn, disconsolate "Me-ew!"

"I feel as if I could mew myself," remarked Andy. "Wish I knew if father and mother stayed at the Van Koven house, or whether they all went to the village. Hope they did. I can row to the house first thing in the morning. I almost feel as if I couldn't find it to-night. I might miss it in the dark. Besides, nobody'd be up to let me in. I'll wait, but I won't try to sleep."

It would not have been of any use if he had. Nobody tried to at the Van Koven place, although, of course, they all lay down more or less, and when tired people lie down nods of sleep will come. Then, if there's a little noise, they may start up suddenly and call out: "What's that? I heard something!"

The rain made nearly all the racket, for the water was not running away, and it did not roar to speak of. Even when Car'line went nearly all the way downstairs and listened, she was compelled to say:

"It's half still down here, all but that gurgling and splashing. Oh, how I want to see how it looks by daylight! I hope mother won't catch cold with so much damp in the house—nor Mr. Rathburn. It must be bad for him."

Mrs. Van Koven was doing very well just then, for she was taking a nap. As for the inspector, he lay upon his bed, all dressed, wide-awake, and his brain was busy with scientific calculations of how much side water pressure a house like that could bear without being swept from its foundations. Some of his figures were very bad for the house, and he made those calculations over again, as if they were dangerous and he could not permit it to be so.

"O Car'line! what is it? You startled me!"

Car'line had gone up the garret stairs, hours later, on tiptoe, not meaning to disturb anybody.

"Why, mother," she said, "it's of no use to worry, but the flood is nearly up to the ceiling of the first story. The floor of the bedrooms is less than two feet above the water."

"Car'line! They'll all have to come up to the garret!"

"I've been watching it," said Car'line. "Seems to me it isn't rising as fast as it did. It's after three o'clock now. Mr. McCracken has kept the fires going, and Mrs. Craik is making coffee. Come down and get some."

"Child! what's in you? I'll come!—This is dreadful!"

So it was, but, for the first time since his arrival, Mr. Rathburn was with them, at the little table that was set in Mrs. Craik's room.

Mr. Craik was also there, and he at once joined in the vigorous effort the inspector was making to cheer them all up.

"There's nobody like Caroline," laughed Rathburn. "She's been regulating the flood. Caroline, I think you've let it get up high enough."

"It isn't raining as hard as it did," said Car'line cheerfully, "and it only rises half an inch at a time. Perhaps it'll stop and go down pretty soon."

"I suppose," put in Mr. Craik, "that when a person is drowning the first sensations are the worst, especially in such freezing cold water as this is—unless it's

at the very moment when they're going under. The feeling——"

"Oh!" screamed Mrs. Van Koven. "Stop! You're dreadful! I don't want to hear another word!"

"I saw a man drown once," he began again, but the inspector headed him off, for Bob and Jim sat by him, and he set them both to barking for their breakfasts in a way to drown Mr. Craik.

Mrs. Craik herself was outwardly calm and self-possessed. Several times she had been heard to remark how glad she was that Andrew had remained in Salterville. No one but Car'line, and she only once, had seen the gray pallor that shot across the kindly face of Andy's mother. It was a paleness that belonged to her remaining doubt as to precisely where her son might really be.

He himself had been suffering somewhat from doubt. He had been watching the rising water even more anxiously than had Car'line. At last he reached out for one of his oars, exclaiming, pretty loudly:

"There! It's above the doorknob more'n six inches. If it should get too high I couldn't get the boat out. I've got to go now!"

A few strokes of his paddle brought him to the door.

He put out the lamp forward, seated the lantern in place of it, and cast loose his moorings at the stair banisters. A few strokes of his paddle brought him to the door, and he bared an arm to reach down through the water and turn the knob.

"Glad I can open it," he said. "If I couldn't, I'd be drowned like a rat in a trap.—Doesn't it rain, though! And isn't it dark!"

Very slowly and with difficulty he pulled open the door, and a wild dash of rain struck him in the face as he pushed his punt out into the open air. He was surprised, next thing, to find that no very strong current was there to sweep him away. He was at the oars now.

"Hullo!" he said as a sharp shock almost unseated him. "That was a cake of ice. I must look out for them.—There! It's the old oak tree by the gate. 'Most upset the boat. I'll tie to a branch and kind o' hold on till it's daylight. I daren't try to row away anywhere.—The water isn't very rough."

In a moment more he was able to say:

"Tied! All right unless the tree pulls up by the roots.—I'll put up the umbrella. I've got to wait here till daylight."

He did so, shivering a little, and not long after that the water at the door he came through was indeed too high for the passage of a boy in a boat.

"What would mother say," he thought, "if she knew where I am? Glad she doesn't."

"Me-a-ow!" came from the cat in the old teacaddy. "Wa-ow-ow-ow!"

"You're all right, old lady," he responded, "if the boat doesn't tip over. This flood'll have to peter out when the snow's used up. This kind o' rain never keeps agoing long."

It was a lonely, gloomy situation. The darkness around was full of a dull, perpetual sound. It seemed almost as if the whole world had floated away and left him nothing but a bit of an old scow punt, a cat, and a lantern, with an umbrella to keep the rain off.

"If the house is going," thought Andy, "I'll be here to see it go."

"Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, cut-cut, ca-daw-cut!" shouted a comforting voice in the darkness near him, and something came drifting against the boat.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Andy. "That woodbox

floated! I'll hitch her on behind. If she'll only go to setting and keep still, she won't be hurt a mite. Let her cackle."

"Cluck-cluck!" said the old brown hen when she heard his voice. "Ca-terr-cut, ca-daw-cut!"

CHAPTER XXI.

OUT O' SIGHT O' LAND.

JUST after the sleeping-car porters came in to put things in order for the night, the train at the Liffenkill bridge began to back out of its bad situation. Everybody that could go to bed did so, and those in the other cars who had no berths spent a great deal of breath in discussing the question:

"Now! Where on earth are we going to?"

The only satisfactory answer given came from a fat old woman who considered it carefully, and then said:

"Well! If you don't know, I do. They're atakin' of us all the way araound, and we won't git there till mornin'."

Morning came and as fast as they awoke they all knew that the train was standing still, and every pair of eyes that opened turned to look out of a window.

"Mrs. Medway!" exclaimed Mrs. Spruance, "are you up? It's stopped raining."

"Up?" said Mrs. Medway. "Why, yes, I've been up this half hour watching it stop. They're getting breakfast ready in the hotel car. There's a tavern in this village. Nobody's going to starve."

They were soon informed, however, that there would be further waiting and that their remaining trip to Salterville would have to be indeed "all the way around." That, too, was all they could yet learn about the freshet and flood of the Liffenkill.

Andy Craik was sitting in his boat, tied to a drooping branch of the old oak tree, and he was learning a great deal more about that flood.

"Me-a-ow!" came from the teacaddy, and whether or not he wanted the cat for company, he let her out.

"No danger of her getting away," he said.

A low sound of clucking came from the wood box that floated a few feet from the stern of the boat.

"She's there," he said. "Chickens, too. All the rest are gone, I suppose, unless they had sense to fly up into the hayloft. I can just see the barn. It's getting lighter pretty fast. The house isn't washed away yet, but the water's above the top o' the front door."

He could have seen further across the water if it

had not been for a white fog that was creeping around as if it were trying to crawl away before the sun could get there. Most of it succeeded in doing so, and when the first sunshine came, Car'line was watching for it at a window of the garret.

"It's just as Mrs. Medway said," she was thinking. "It's wonderful when you're at sea to be out o' sight of land.—It's all water and floating ice as far as you can see.—Oh! isn't that beautiful!"

What she meant was that just then a puff of wind swept away a curtain of fog, so that she could see the sunrise glitter along the crests of the Broken Ridge Mountains. They seemed as if something had pulled them nearer. It was very grand, but her heart beat hard, for it was also very terrible.

"I'll go downstairs," she said, "and look out of the front entry window. I won't wake up anybody."

"Car'line!" called out her mother, from the other side of the garret, "is the house shaking any? Seems to me it is!"

"No, it isn't, mother," said Car'line. "There's no wind to shake it. The sun's up. I'll be back in a minute."

"O child!" said Mrs. Van Koven. "How you do go! I want to see how it is myself. It's just horrible."

The old gray house was not by any means a large one. On the ground floor was the parlor, on the right as one went in. Across the hall to the left was the sitting-room-dining-room, with Mrs. Van Koven's bedroom behind it, unless she chose to sleep in one of the two big chambers that used up the second story. The one of these over the parlor was Mr. Rathburn's, and a cot also had been put into it for Fergus McCracken. The other chamber had been Car'line's most of the time, and Mrs. and Mr. Craik were in it. The kitchen was a rear addition, only one story high. Ordinarily there was more room than was needed. The "entry" on the second floor went all the way through, so that Car'line could get to the front window of it without disturbing anybody. The door of Mrs. Craik's room was open, however, and she could hear Mr. Craik remarking:

"No, Sarah. The rain's holdin' up a little, but the snow'll keep on thawin' now the sun's up. We'll all be cooped up in the garret before noon, unless the house gets loose and floats away. If it does, most likely it'll tip over."

He did not speak at all dolefully, but his wife responded:

"O husband! If I only knew what had become of Andrew! I've been apraying all night! I couldn't sleep a wink. What if he is at the village? What do we know about that? This flood may have taken everything. I want to see him!"

"You can't just now," remarked Mr. Craik, and Car'line knew by the rapping of his sticks on the floor that he was coming out into the entry.

"There!" she said, gazing through the window. "That's like a house floating away out there in the mist."

She said it aloud, and she was answered by a shriek from Mrs. Craik.

"House? House floating? Car'line, is it our house? Can you see Andy?"

"I guess it isn't your house," said Car'line. "Only the roof's above the water. I can't see any chimney. The fog is in the way."

"I can see it," said Mrs. Craik, at a window of her own room. "And there's a haystack, Car'line."

"It's a barn roof, I guess," responded Car'line.

"It isn't big enough for your house.—It's getting lighter."

"Wife!" exclaimed Mr. Craik, from behind Car'line. "Look! Isn't that our kitchen stove?"

"Mr. Craik!" almost gasped Car'line. "Why! It wouldn't float!"

"Oh!" he said. "I s'pose not! But the water's a'most away upstairs. We haven't long to wait now!"

Car'line was silent, but the thought she did not utter was:

"How scared he must be! He's so scared he thought a stove could float!"

He could not have told it better in any other way, but things were really looking pretty badly and Mr. Craik worked his way back along the entry, groaning:

"I guess I'll go up into the garret. That'll be the safest place, unless they do something to upset the house. I don't want to stay where that fidgety girl is."

Her mother did, then, and she was at the bottom of the garret stairs when Mr. Craik got there.

"I'm going right up," he said. "You can see farther from those windows. There's an awful lot of snow to melt yet."

There might be, and Mr. Rathburn, at a window of his own room, turned and said to the old miner:

"It looks pretty bad, my boy. A full inch higher in the last hour and a half. But I'm glad this house is built long and not high. It will not stand broadside to the current."

"I'll no gang oot," responded McCracken. "I dinna want to luk at the lassie, the morn, nor her mither. I'm a' doon-hearted. An' I'm thinking, too, o' the lad. I know he went home, an' that hoose is on lower groun' than this. It's gane!"

Andy himself, sitting in his boat, was staring hard at the house which had been his home. So was the frightened maltese that cowered in his lap.

"It's lifting!" he exclaimed. "It's tipping! The big tree went right against it! Over it goes! Oh! it's awful!—What'll mother say, and father? I wish I knew about them!—Clean over, and there it is, lodged among the apple trees!"

The maltese had leaped from his lap and was now standing on the front seat by the lantern, with her back up and her tail expanded, as if the overturned house had been an unfriendly dog or some other cat.

"I'm going!" said Andy. "I'll put you into the teacaddy for keeps, and then I'll cut loose."

In she had to go, much against her will, the cover was fastened down, and then Andy untied the boat rope. He did so with a strong feeling that he was going on into danger, for he had been anchored very securely by the sturdy old oak.

There was current enough to carry him away at once while he was getting out his oars, but the floating cakes of ice were also moving, and he did not run against them.

"Touch and go," he said. "That was a big one.—I can see farther now. But I wouldn't ha' believed there could ha' been so big a flood."

Nobody in Salterville would have believed it, and almost the entire population was out, early as it was, gazing at the waste of waters and at the great ice and lumber barrier along the line of the dam. This had been built, as a matter of course, at a somewhat narrow passage with high banks on either side, just the place for a dam. The special object of interest to all observers just now was a four-oared boat, away out in the middle, whose rowers pulled hard against the current,

while a man at the front seat seemed to be searching for something.

"Michael," said one man to another on the shore, "do you know what they're up to?"

"He's all the way from Mine No. 3," responded Mrs. Medway's coachman. "He's hoontin' a hape o' logs an' stuff that's dhry to put in a cattridge, so it'll go aff. He said he'd put in rind-rock powdher an' blow a hole yiz could put a hill in."

"That's it," replied his friend. "I hope he'll find wan if it takes oll day; but if they don't pull pretty well they'll oll go over the dam."

The rowers were aware of that, and the entire proceeding was very interesting indeed. It could not be seen by anybody as far away as the Van Koven windows, but Mr. Rathburn was even then remarking to McCracken:

"Why don't they blast the dam?—Oh! if I wasn't shut up here I'd find a way to let this water out! Where can all their engineers have gone?"

A pretty good one was said to be in the four-oared boat, but the puller of a two-oared punt a great deal nearer the house was no engineer at all, and he was in

difficulties as a navigator. He was on an unknown sea, without any map, and a section of the drifting fog had closed around him perplexingly.

"Mrs. Van Koven's house must have been swept away," he exclaimed anxiously, "or else I've passed it. Swept away? And maybe father and mother were in it. And Car'line and her mother, and poor Mr. Rathburn and the old miner. Mother?—What did she stay there for? Why didn't she go on to the village?—I'll pull around where the house used to be.—What's that? Hi——" His voice choked in his throat and he could not call out, but from somewhere just beyond that dense bit of fog there came again a voice that said "Woof!" followed by another similar voice that replied: "Woo-ur-woof!"

"The dogs?" said Andy. "They may be swimming. That means the rest are all drowned."

He tried hard to call out "Bob" and then "Jim," but it was of no use. All he could do was to pull for a moment, and then suddenly there were voices all around him on the water, calling to each other rather than to him. Not one of them seemed to express any alarm, but Andy almost shouted this time:

"Mrs. Van Koven's geese! All her ducks, too! She'll lose every one of them! There they go asailing——"

"Andy! Andy! O Andrew! Here! Come! come! my child!"

"Mother!" screamed Andy, "I'm here! I'm coming! U-ugh!" and he pulled out of the fog with something sticking in his throat, while all the geese and ducks quacked in chorus and the two setters barked like mad.

"Andy!" called out Car'line. "Pull right to this window. Your mother's here. Your father's upstairs. We're all here, but the water's almost up to the top of the stairs."

"Car'line," shouted back Andy, "our house has gone over among the apple trees."

"O Andy! Thank God, you're safe!" exclaimed his mother.

"Yes, mother," said Andy, as his boat came under the window; "our house is gone. It tipped over; but I saved the cat, and I'll hand her right in. Lots of other things, too."

"Bless the Laird!" said McCracken, at the other

window, but he was the only person who made any kind of remark for a number of seconds.

"Come in, Andrew," said his mother, then. "Come right in. Don't wait for anything. I want you in here."

"I will, mother," he said; "but I wish you'd let me unload."

No, she wouldn't. The unloading could wait until she had seen him standing on the floor all alive, and had hugged and kissed him and made him tell her about his night in the lonely house and moored to the old oak tree. All the while, however, McCracken was in the boat, taking out cargo. He even cared for the towed wood box, and when Mr. Craik came down from the garret, as he did rapidly for him, the first to greet him was the old brown hen and her five chickens, clucking her way along the entry floor, with all her feathers on end.

"I was thinking of her," said Mr. Craik.

CHAPTER XXII.

LOST BAGGAGE.

"I COUNTED them as well as I could," remarked Mrs. Van Koven. "As far as I can see, they're all there. I'm so glad they can swim."

"But where will they go?" said Car'line. "I wish we could all swim."

"I can," exclaimed Andy, to whom his mother was still clinging; "but now the boat's here, we can go ashore."

"Ye'll no gang oot in that punt," responded McCracken. "There's too much floatin' ice an' driftwood. Ye'll a' bide awee. Hoo ye got here yersel' I dinna ken, unless the Laird guidet the punt i' th' dark. 'Twas no a gallery, like in a mine, wi' walls to feel o' on baith sides."

That appeared to be about his idea of perfect safety in a stormy time, but he was evidently in great admira-

tion of "the laddie," and was even disposed to think well of the cat and the hen for Andy's sake.

The boat, all empty now, rocked idly under the window at which Car'line sat gazing out across the flood, and watching particularly the quite comfortable ducks and geese. Her mother had turned away, half relieved to see how well they were, but altogether discomforted over her uncertainty of ever seeing them again.

Andy came to join her, and the first words he said were:

"I can just go anywhere in that boat."

"But if we did tip over," said Car'line, "we'd all drown. We'd be safer in our garret. Your father says we'll have to stay there a week, but I don't believe it."

"I don't care if we do," replied Andy, "if the house doesn't lop over.—Hullo! Car'line! What's that stuck in the branch of the old sycamore?"

"Andy!" gasped Car'line. "It's a trunk! Let's go and get it!"

"Of course we will," said Andy. "Let me get into the boat first. Where could it have come from?"

Car'line made no reply, but there was a look

of intense interest in her face, and she instantly followed Andy's rapid descent into the rocking, unsteady punt. He took the oars and she at once cast off the rope that was fastened at the window sill, but the moment he pulled away he was aware of a very different feeling from that with which he had rowed away from the oak tree. It was not altogether that then he had been going with the current and was now pulling against it. It seemed stronger, rougher, with more ice and floating timber fragments. He was not carrying so much cargo, truly, but it struck him suddenly how vast was the difference in value between the maltese cat and Car'line. He felt red in the face, anxious, and in a hurry.

"We won't be gone but a minute," he exclaimed. "When we get to the trunk, you hitch that other rope to the handle of it. We must tow it astern."

"It's right there," she said coolly. "We mustn't let it get away. It's floating first-rate. Pull, Andy!"

"I almost wish we hadn't come," he muttered. "It's running swifter."

"To the right," she said. "Just a little. Pull now. Here we are. Two strokes more."

"Be quick, Car'line," said Andy. "It's awful to have you here."

A loud cry seemed to answer him from the window they had left. It was a man's voice.

"The bonnie lassie!" it shouted. "She's gane! She an' Andrew! Oh, the day! O good Laird! They're after that travelin' box yonder. O mon! If I had but anither boat! It's awfu'!"

"My child!" screamed Mrs. Van Koven, behind him, and Mrs. Craik echoed her:

"My child! O my boy! What did they do it for? They can't get back!"

"Look at her noo!" said McCracken, leaning half out of the window. "She's grapplin' it wi' a rope."

"Andy is pulling well," said Rathburn, almost breathlessly, at the other window.—"She's tied it! The bravest girl I ever heard of! Cool as ice."

"Now, Andy! All right!" shouted Car'line. "Can you turn around?"

"Let the rope run out," said Andy. "I can turn without hitting the branch."

That was precisely what he did not succeed in doing, and for a moment the frail craft rocked frightfully in

the small whirlpool made by the flood among the projecting boughs of the fallen sycamore. There seemed to be more of them, sticking up everywhere, now that the trunk was to be towed out from among them.

"Pull, Andy! Pull!" exclaimed Car'line. "I've got it loose from that hitch. How it does whirl away!"

"It's so big and so heavy," groaned poor Andy, pulling his best.

Well for them both that there was a kind of eddy swinging them and their clumsy prize a number of yards nearer the house, but a drift of icecakes whirled along at the same time.

"Steady, Andy! steady!" shouted Mr. Rathburn. "Don't pull so fast. You are coming. Easy now."

"Let go of the trunk!" called out Mr. Craik. "That's what's the matter. If it wasn't for that you could both get back."

Car'line heard him, but she did not let go. Her lips tightened firmly, and she held on, saying to Andy:

"Just one minute more now. Get the boat to the window, and then we can haul the trunk in afterward."

"That's it," said Andy. "Glad there's lots o' rope. Let it out.—I'm getting short o' breath. I'm tired."

He had forgotten till that moment that he had been out all night in that storm, and had neither rested since nor eaten anything. He had less pull in him than usual, and what there was went from him at every stroke.

"I'll do it!" he said courageously, but his face was white and his arms and legs felt very weary.

"Lassie! lassie!" said the old miner anxiously. "Be ready to hand me the hitchin' rope. Thraw it, lass!"

"O Car'line! Car'line!" was all that poor Mrs. Van Koven could think of to say, but Mr. Rathburn was an engineer.

"Swing by this window as close as you can, Andy," he shouted. "You can't reach the other. Steady now! Catch!"

"That's it, Mr. Rathburn!" replied Andy. "I couldn't ha' pulled another stroke."

Nevertheless, it was Car'line who so deftly caught hold of the flying rope thrown out by the inspector. It was a clothesline he had found in the entry, and in a moment more it was fast to the ring on the bow of the punt.

"They're saved!" exclaimed Mrs. Craik.

"Not yet," said Rathburn seriously. "We've a ticklish bit of work to do.—Mack, let the boat swing to your window.—Can you steer it in a little, Andy?"

"I'll be ready to tak' her oot," said the old miner. "Ach! lassie! Be wide-awak' noo. Ye're nearin' the hoose. If the punt bangs too hard it'll gang ower."

It was a moment of extreme peril on that precise account, for the flood rippled hard and swiftly against the wall and the floating drift was grinding there dangerously.

"Back noo, ma'am," said McCracken to Mrs. Van Koven. "Ye're no' strang aneuch to h'ist her thraugh th' window.—Haul on th' rope, Rathburn. A yard more, mon.—Steady noo, laddie."

Up stood Car'line, balancing fearlessly as the boat under her veered and swung and tottered. Out went her arms as it was drawn under the window.

"I won't tip it over!" she shouted to Andy. "Catch the rope!"

Even as she spoke she threw it back to him, and then she felt as if a gripe made of iron took hold of her and lifted her in.

"Thank the good Laird!" gasped McCracken. "I've brocht her in!"

"O mother!" exclaimed Car'line; but there was a sound of a heavy fall, and there on the floor lay the brawny form of the old miner.

It was not the effect of this one lift or strain, but of all that he had done or endured since the first mass of rubbish fell upon him in the far drift gallery of Mine No. 3. He had fainted.

"I can hardly keep the boat steady," was what Andy was saying at that moment. "I must, though. Mr. Rathburn's pulling again. Wonder if I can climb in?"

Perhaps he could not have done so, in his exhaustion and excitement, but there at the window sill kneeled old Mr. Craik, the hot tears hopping down his face, holding out his hands and saying:

"Let me get a hold of you, Andy. I'm strong in my arms. Let me get a good grip. It's your last hope There isn't a chance of saving you, but I won't give it up.—O-oh! Mother! I've got him! He's coming! Here he is! Thank God!—O Andy! what did you go for?"

He tumbled clean over and so did Andy, but they

were both on their feet again at once, for Mr. Craik arose and stood without any sticks, while his wife seemed to be examining Andy all over to see if he had been injured, remarking also that he ought to have something to eat right away.

Perhaps Mrs. Van Koven would have been scolding Car'line if both of them had not been stooping over Fergus McCracken, without saying anything.

Andy had stuck to the "painter" of his boat and Rathburn had instantly caught it, making it fast, and with it the longer line attached to the trunk.

"She risked enough for that," he said. "She'd feel badly if I let it get away."

Car'line heard him, but she had really forgotten her prize for a moment in her anxiety about the old miner. She was kneeling when Rathburn got there, and she was trying to lift the grizzled, hard-featured head, but the closed eyes opened slowly.

"It's the lassie!" he said. "She didna droun? Bless the Laird! I thocht she was gane.—Ye're no hurt, lassie?"

Car'line was crying hard, but her mother was able to say:

"Child! you ought never to have done such a thing!" and Rathburn, leaning over them, inquired:

"Did it seem to pain you anywhere, McCracken, or was it just a breakdown?"

"Just as I tawld ye, mon," returned McCracken. "It's no harm. I'll be oop in a bit. I'm bruk a' ower, frae head to fut, but my banes are no crackit. 'Twas a quick lift that felled me, just as the doctor said."

"Don't try to get up for a moment," said the inspector, but Mrs. Van Koven had already brought one of her fattest feather pillows for him to put his head on.

As soon as it was resting there Car'line went for a big comfortable and a blanket. The old miner's eyes followed her and then waited for her, but she was not thinking altogether of him.

"We'd ha' been swept away and drowned," she thought, "if it hadn't been for Mr. Rathburn and his clothesline. He's an engineer. I'm so glad he was here. But, then, he's always belonged here. It's his home and he ought to ha' been here."

Well! He had boarded at that house whenever his duties brought him into the Liffenkill Valley, but he

had never agreed with his landlady to be there in case of a freshet in the creek. He had been there this time, however, for a long season, and he did seem very much like one of the family. All the directing since the flood began had in some manner come from him, without anybody taking note of it or disputing him. There he was now at the window, pulling on the rope that was fastened to the trunk. Only about a quarter of the huge box showed above the water, but an ice cake struck it and tipped one end up, so that a lot of lettering showed for a moment. Car'line had leaned out of the window by Mr. Rathburn, and she exclaimed excitedly:

"Mrs. Medway! It's her trunk! I almost thought it was! Oh! I hope nothing has happened to her.—Mother! it's Mrs. Medway's trunk!"

"Car'line! You don't say so!" responded Mrs. Van Koven, but the inspector's face was very grave indeed.

"I feared it," he said. "I reported that bridge twice. It must have been the express train from the east.—Horrible! Dashing into the gap at the rate of forty miles an hour! And into the flood!"

"Not a soul of them could ha' been saved," groaned

old Mr. Craik as he heard. "But I suppose all the bodies can be recovered after the flood goes down. I'm sorry for poor Mr. Medway, unless he was with his wife and they were both drowned at the same time. Probably they were."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OLD MINER.

"I'M so glad!" exclaimed Mrs. Medway to the conductor, at the end of his hurried explanation of the state of affairs. "It's as good as it can be!"

"Yes, madam," replied the smiling official. "Both of the flagmen were in the caboose of the locomotive, contrary to orders. Nobody was killed.—The two baggage cars——"

"That is awful!" interrupted Mrs. Spruance. "I don't care for Mrs. Medway. She says her trunk is water-tight and would float across the Atlantic, but mine isn't; and there it is, and a whole package of General Spruance's best speeches that he gave me to carry home. All his arguments before the Supreme Court."

"I'm afraid they can't be made again," smiled the conductor. "They're all water-soaked by this time."

"What's the use of having a water-tight trunk,"

inquired Mrs. Medway, "if you don't know where it is?"

"All baggage will be found, I think," said the conductor as he walked on; "but nothing can be done till the flood goes down."

"Some on't 'll be found pretty well down stream then," remarked a sturdy-looking man near them. "If that there woman's kit'll float, mebbe it's cruisin' 'round Delawar' Bay by this time."

Mrs. Medway's countenance fell as she heard that, and Mrs. Spruance remarked:

"Mebbe 'twas too heavy, and if it was, and if it sunk to the bottom, there it is."

"It's somewhere," replied Mrs. Medway, a little raspily, "and I'm going to set out to find it just as soon as the flood runs away. I'm not going to give up all there was in that trunk."

"General Spruance'll feel awfully," mourned his wife. "Some of the best speeches he ever made; but most of my things are in my other trunk, and I sent it home by express more'n a week ago."

There were a number of dismal faces in that car, but it was in motion again and the entire bag-

gage question was away behind it in the Liffenkill Creek.

Part of it was floating at the end of a rope in front of the Van Koven house, and all the inmates of that dwelling were staring at it from one window or another, excepting Fergus McCracken.

"What'll they a' do noo?" he inquired of himself as he lay there on the floor. "An' hoo'll I keep the lassie frae warkin'? There's na tell'n what she'll do."

So said her own mother, but she added:

"I don't see what else Car'line can do. If the flood gets any higher we'll all have to go up into the garret."

The inspector turned and walked away to the head of the stairs, and, as he looked he shook his head, muttering:

"I needn't tell them but it's another inch.—Hark! What? That's a blast."

"Cracky!" exclaimed Andy at the window. "Car'line, something's gone off."

"It's a terrific explosion," said Mr. Craik, and McCracken, on the floor, added:

"Mr. Rathburn, wait for the tremor o' th' blast an' I'll tell you where it is. Hi! There, mon! Dinna you feel't? It cooms frae the southard."

Nearly a minute had elapsed when he said that, and not another word had broken the silence, for the roar which came first had indeed been tremendous.

Now the house itself seemed to rock with the strong vibration of the water it stood in, while a sort of wave swept over the surface of the flood, rising to the sills of the windows and lapping threateningly over.

"'Twas at the milldam," calmly remarked the inspector. "I think it must have been a very powerful blast."

So thought all the crowds of people who at that hour lined the shores of the mill pond below Salterville. About two minutes earlier they had seen the four-oared boat rowed away, somewhat vigorously, as if the rowers were willing to put a goodly distance between them and the ice-and-lumber pile at the middle of the dam.

"Guess they've done it," remarked the postmaster of Salterville. "That heap o' stuff'll be distributed in no time."

He was wrong there, for it seemed a very long time for so many people to wait. If it was only two minutes for each, then every thirty of them waited a full hour.

They grew impatient, and not a few of them were beginning to speak disrespectfully of the mining engineer in the boat, and even of dynamite in general.

"That there cattridge got soaked," was a loudly uttered remark that everybody heard a second before at least a hundred added

"Oh!"

A great spirt of water shot up from the point they were all watching, and it seemed to enlarge, as it went, into a broad sheet of spray and fire, that was mingled the next second with planks and timbers, tree branches and ice fragments. The roar of the explosion followed, more than one distinct detonation testifying to the number of cartridges.

"Every one of 'em went off," said the engineer in the boat. "Pull for the shore, boys. There'll be a rush o' water through that gap. It'd draw us in if it got hold of us."

A loud cheering on both banks of the Liffenkill sounded as if it was praising him for what he had done. He had indeed exhibited both courage and skill, and the rend-rock powder had shown tremendous power for making a sudden excavation. The gap in the barrier

A great spirt of water shot up.

was wide and deep, and the flood rushed into it angrily a torrent of muddy foam.

"Mr. Rathburn," inquired Car'line, looking wistfully into the thoughtful face of the inspector, "will there be any more danger, now? Can the blast hurt us?"

"No," he said; "but the water may run away very fast—fast enough to carry a great many things with it. If you and Andy were out there now, nothing would be of any use."

"Aye, mon!" came from a head on the floor near them. "She'd ha' been gane, an' the laddie. Bless the Laird! They're in the hoose. But the gret flood'll gang on doon th' valley."

It was doing so, uproariously, and the crowds that were watching it wondered that the lake above the dam did not at once disappear. The mining engineer explained to them that the Liffenkill was still pouring into it all the water it could obtain from the mountains, and that there was really a very large supply on hand.

"It's just as well it should go off a little steadily," he said. "There'll be harm enough done anyhow."

That was about what Mr. Rathburn was explaining

to a circle that looked very much like his own household as they gathered around him.

"I'm so glad you're well," said Mrs. Craik, "now something's the matter with Mr. McCracken."

"I'm here, mother," remarked Andy in a reassuring way, but Mrs. Van Koven's thoughts were at that moment wandering down the flood, for she exclaimed:

"Oh! my geese! They'll all be swept away, and the poor ducks too! There won't one of 'em know enough to go ashore!"

"It's the fires, Mr. Rathburn," came from the old miner just then. "They're burnin' low. You'll no let the lassie care for 'em. She's meddlin' wi' 'em, I think."

Away went the inspector to take a scuttle of coal away from Car'line, and then to prevent her carrying an armful of wood up into the garret.

"Andy can attend to all that sort of thing," he told her. "It's all the chores he'll have to do."

"She sha'n't touch 'em!" said Andy. "I won't let her carry a stick."

"Mrs. Craik and mother won't let me touch the cooking," responded Car'line. "I don't know what to do. They seem to think I've been hurt somehow."

That was just about Mrs. Van Koven's idea. It was impossible, of course, that a girl like Car'line could have been so nearly drowned in a flood without making her unfit for further exertion.

"I declare!" she said. "If they won't let me do anything else, I can go up and stay in the garret."

She did not do so at once, however. Not only was she entirely destitute of wool in proper shape for spinning, but she was becoming deeply interested in a series of observations that the inspector was making at the stairs.

"One inch lower," he said about an hour after the explosion. "Considering the area under water, that means an enormous outflow at the gap."

"I s'pose," remarked Mr. Craik, "it's just asweeping things in the valley below the dam. Their turn's come now. But they've had time to move onto high ground, and I hope not many of 'em 'll really be drowned. Only sech as stayed behind too long; and there's no help for them."

"'Twon't hurt 'em," said the inspector, gazing out at the flood lake; but Car'line exclaimed:

"O Mr. Rathburn! I can't help thinking about

poor Mrs. Medway. I do wish I knew. She was so good and kind."

"Don't cry, dear," said her mother. "All you know is that that's her trunk."

"But where is she, mother? She must have been on that train."

"We don't know how much really happened to the train," said Mr. Rathburn encouragingly, and there were comforting remarks all around, even Mr. Craik assuring her:

"Why, Car'line, you can be safe 'bout one thing. They didn't burn up this time. You see, when a car load o' passengers goes right down under water, that's the end of it; but when they take fire and burn up——"

"O husband! Don't!" said his wife.

As for Car'line, she turned away, and now she did go up into the garret, as if it were a kind of relief to her feelings to cram the old sheet-iron stove with wood and then to go to the window toward the barns and stare at something besides that horrible, hateful flood.

Mr. Rathburn himself left the stairs and his flood

marks to go and stoop inquiringly over Fergus McCracken.

"Any pain now?" he asked.

"No bit," responded the old miner. "I'm bruk, that's a'. 'Twas a ha-ard fa' o' rock i' th' mine. I felt it then, an' it's waur an' waur noo. I ne'er gave in to a hit till this wan. I'm aulder'n you'd think.—But I'm glad the lassie gat in.—I never had a lassie o' my ain."

"Why, Mr. McCracken," said Mrs. Van Koven, "you're not getting worse? Car'line'll feel so——"

"Na, na," he said. "Dinna trouble the lassie.—But I'm auld."

"Not very, I think," said the inspector cheerfully. "You'll mend. You're only a middle-aged man."

"I'm aulder'n that, mon," replied McCracken, turning his head away on the pillow. "I'm tauld I was born i' a mine. Hoo 'twas I dinna ken. But I can count thrae score o' years since they med me a fu' hand i' th' Low Muir iron mines. I've picked in mony a mine since then. No' lang in ony wan o' them. I couldna' stay lang in ony drift."

"Got tired of digging along in the same place?" suggested the inspector.

"Belike," said McCracken thoughtfully. "But I aye longed for anither mine, I dinna ken what or where. I'd pick and shovel a while, an' somethin'd tell me, 'It's not this mine; gang on, mon,' and on I'd gang. I was just ready to quit work in Mine No. 3 when th' rubbish fell on me an' th' floodin' came."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE GOING OF THE FLOOD.

THEY were perfect geese!

Of what use had it been for Jim Robinson, Andy Craik's best friend in Salterville, to tole all those water fowl ashore so cunningly that morning? It cost him, as he averred, "pretty nigh a peck o' shelled corn, and as soon as they gobbled it up off they went again 'fore I could pen 'em in."

It was such abundant swimming room. So much of it and so good. But they were all, even the ducks, making perfect geese of themselves, in their ignorance of what the mining engineer and his cartridges were about to do with the barrier at the dam. Nobody went out after them to argue with them or to interfere in any way with what appeared to be a kind of free swimming match.

Jim Robinson continued to take special interest in them, for he remarked to some of the people around him:

"There they go. I guess they're 'bout all that's left of those two whole fam'lies. Andy was a real good feller, but he couldn't swim like they can. It's an awful pity!—Hullo!"

That was the explosion at the dam, and Mrs. Van Koven's birds, so to speak, joined loudly in the acclamation that followed. They did more, for they were caught by the rush of the waters and so they followed the swift tide of events. It was a tide that poured over what was left of the dam, truly, but there did not seem to be any fall of water, any cascade, only a tumultuous, swirling torrent, plunging down through a wide gap. The old gander went first, head first, squawking loudly to his clan of all sorts, and Mrs. Van Koven's best goose followed him with a wild outcry that may have been a reproof of him for leading her down such an awful slide as that.

Then it was ducks and after them more geese, but all the ducks went over with their heads upstream, as if they were trying to go home instead of further down the Liffenkill. Any quacking they did was drowned in the roar of the mad waters, but not one duck nor drake was drowned, and the old gander himself shortly

pulled up and grew steady again in a wide reach of calmer water, half a mile below the dam. Most of that level had been occupied the previous summer by the garden and lawn and peach orchard of the Medway estate. It had all been very beautiful, even up to the coming of the blizzard.

"It's there under the water somewhere, Michael! Has anybody seen anything yet of any baggage?"

"Not a bit, ma'am. Indade it couldn't get over the dam till now. I drove fast to tell you, ma'am. The blast——"

"I heard it," she said, standing on her veranda, still in her traveling dress and wraps, and staring across her flooded domain. "The water didn't come any higher here.—But look at those geese, Michael! Nobody kept geese but Mrs. Van Koven! Those are hers!"

"Pity o' that!" said Michael. "There's no word of ony o' them at the village. I'm feared they're all gone."

"Oh, horrible!" exclaimed Mrs. Medway.

"There's no getting near either o' those upper places, ma'am," replied Michael. "We gave 'em up

yesterday, only that a man went to the bluff and brought word he could see the Van Koven roof, and all around it was water. The Craik house is all swept under."

"Oh! my pretty, dear Caroline!" sobbed Mrs. Medway. "And her mother, and the Craiks, and the inspector.—Oh, dear! I'll rest, and I'll change my dress, and then have the carriage ready. I'm tired, but I must drive to the village."

"I'll be ready, ma'am," he said, and he went off with a strong sense of having done his duty in painting the condition of affairs with all the black he had at his disposal.

The old gander also did his duty, for he led his army ashore and they were now all engaged in fixing their feathers under Mrs. Medway's own window.

Away upstream and up at the garret window looking toward the bluff, Car'line Van Koven stood with her hands behind her.

"The house does tremble," she said aloud. "I can feel it up here more than I could downstairs. I wonder how long it'll take for the water to run away. Mr. Rathburn said it would go down faster than it came

up. But it must have spoiled everything downstairs. Anyhow, the snow's melted and we can get to the village. I wouldn't care, if it wasn't for Mrs. Medway and Mr. McCracken. The Craik house was as old as the hills, and they can build a new one. They're worth more money than mother is. I'm glad she's got some, but it won't be half enough. It makes us poor. I'm old enough to go to work at something—I am. Something better than geese!"

That was spoken almost contemptuously, but Car'line had not witnessed the heroic leadership of the old gander, and her house was indeed shaking under her with the violence of the current now boiling against it.

"Oh! What is that?" she suddenly exclaimed. "What a bang that was! I'll go to the other window! Something awful hit the house!"

It was nothing but a floating beam, a dead loss to some of the choppers among the mountain forests, but it had struck the corner of the house a terrific blow. Then it swung away and set out upon a new career, no man knew whither, nor did the beam know any more than a man.

"I can see Mrs. Medway's trunk down there," said

Car'line at the window. "It's out at the end of its rope, but we can pull it in. The boat's there too."

They were not so very far below where she stood, after all, but they were rocking and tetering about in a way that told what a commotion had taken hold of the flood they floated in.

"It's time for Mr. McCracken to have a cup of coffee," exclaimed Car'line. "I mustn't forget that. I wish I knew what to do for him, but there just isn't anything. All he can do is to lie still."

Rathburn and the setters were sitting by McCracken when she went down, and the old miner lay there as still as a mouse.

"Car'line!" exclaimed her mother, "just come and look at the stairs! The water's gone down a foot. It's awful! No wonder it runs so outside.—I wish I knew what had become of my geese."

"All my poultry are gone long ago," said Mrs. Craik sorrowfully.

"All but the brown hen and her chickens," interjected her husband. "There were five of 'em; but the lame black one, he tumbled down the back stairs and swam out toward the kitchen."

"Only four left," said Andy; "but that's enough to make a new start with. All the pigs are safe, and the cows and horses.—But won't this be a wet country for a while! It'll take an awful lot o' sun to dry it fit to live in."

It was terribly wet as yet, although the sun was doing very well, for it was only a thawing sun.

Car'line hardly glanced at the water mark in the stairway, and in a minute more she was by the side of Fergus McCracken with her cup of hot coffee.

"Bless the lassie!" she heard him murmur as he opened his eyes. "I was dreamin' o' just that. I aye longed for a hame an' bairns, but they'll no coom till I fin' that ither mine I'm seekin'. I've hunted it far an' wide. Thank you, lass. You're ower gude."

"You'll be all well pretty soon," said Car'line. "You mustn't lift any more. You didn't say you'd been hurt."

"I'm no hurt," he protested. "I'm doin' weel. It's just a brak', an' I ne'er had ane till noo."

"You'll be up," the inspector told him. "But you must lie still now. I don't believe any more

timber can be floated against the house. 'Twas the eddy did it—the eddy around the roots of the sycamore."

"It'll scoop a hollow there," said McCracken; but Mr. Craik added:

"I've been watching that eddy. It's a whirlpool, and it's eating into the bank fearfully. The earth is falling out into it, tons and tons at a time. The tree itself may be floated away."

He said it as if the departure of that branching wreck would be a general disaster, but there was really no such danger. It was more as if it had been stuck right there that its mass of uptorn roots might be in the way of the rushing current and create the eddy that was now stealing so much of the Van Koven land, just above the house yard.

There was a kind of mournful interest for all of them during the remainder of that day in going every now and then to the stairs to see if another of these had reappeared, to tell that there must be less water in the lower story. Just so the people of Salterville watched the shore marks, all the while trying to make cash calculations of the amount of damage which had

been sustained by the Liffenkill Valley. One old farmer aroused general resentment by asserting roundly:

"'Ceptin' the snowbanks and the ice and a lot o' lumber, I don't see that there's much gone. They can mend that hole in the dam."

"But what if the Van Kovens and the Craiks are all drowned?" inquired Mrs. Medway angrily, leaning half out of her barouche. "Not a word has been heard from them."

"Well, ma'am," he responded, "I saw Smith; he was Craik's hired man. He says they all got to Mrs. Van Koven's. He believes they did. Her haouse is astandin' yet. They may be pretty nigh starved aout, but I guess they're livin'. Yeou wait."

CHAPTER XXV.

CAR'LINE'S MINE.

"HEAR it gurgle! I wonder if the water is deeper in the house than it is outside. It's almost down to the bottom of the stairs. How it has run away!"

Car'line stood at the head of the stairs with a candle in her hand, peering down anxiously. A damp smell came up and the air was chilly, for all the fires had been burning low. She could hear the noise made by Andy as he built them higher.

"He will wake up everybody," she said. "But I guess it's about time. They'll all be glad to see how it's going.—How poor mother and I will be! Why, we can't stay and live in this old, water-soaked house. What shall we do?"

The stairway was dreadfully gloomy, and she turned from it to go and look out at the front window of the entry.

"Beautiful moonlight," she said, "but it's all water as far as you can see.—Isn't it getting lighter? Seems to me it is.—I lay down, but I haven't slept a wink."

Sometimes people sleep a little almost without knowing it, but she had at last given it up in the dark hour before the dawn. There was a chair, and she sat down in it with a tired feeling all over her, and a kind of sickness at her heart, for there was a great deal to think of.

"Caroline," said a deep, kindly voice behind her, "you ought not to be up."

"O Mr. Rathburn!" she exclaimed. "How is Mr. McCracken? Is he any better?"

"He is asleep yet," replied the inspector. "I think he will do pretty well. I must get him out of this as soon as the water goes. All the rest of you too. I'm feeling a little like myself this morning."

"You can go to Europe," she said, staring out toward the mountains—"There's Andy's boat.—I wish I could see a steamship."

"You will one of these days," he said, but she answered, very thoughtfully:

"Poor Mrs. Medway! She'll never travel any more. I wish I could see her again."

"Car'line! Child, what did you get up for? You ought to be in bed. Oh, dear! All the rest are up, and Andy says he guesses the flood's played out."

"Why, mother," said Car'line, turning to look at her, "it's almost gone, but there's ever so much to go yet."

"Much sooner than I counted on," remarked Mr. Rathburn. "I think we've done first-rate so far."

Mr. Craik himself had been toled out of his room by the sound of voices, and there was nothing the matter with his own when he told them—

"I s'pose we have, except that our house and barns are gone, and everything that was in 'em. But I sha'n't feel quite satisfied till I find how many people were drowned down at the village. The mill must ha' gone when the dam did. They can begin to fish now for all the folks that were in that train when it ran off into the water at the bridge. Those express trains are always crowded."

"Mr. Craik!" said his wife, shuddering. "It may have been nothing but a freight and baggage train.

—Come right in, all of you, and get something to eat."

"Mr. Rathburn," said Car'line, "Mr. McCracken —he ought to have something right away."

"Soon as he's awake," said the inspector. "I'll go and see."

There he lay, the grizzled old miner, on his cot. He had refused to even take his boots off, for fear of some summons to fight the flood in the night, and he was wide-awake when Car'line walked softly in with a cup of coffee.

"The lassie!" he murmured. "How's the water gangin'?—You're ower gude to th' auld mon.—You're lukin' fine; but is it morn a'ready?"

"I'm so glad you can talk!" she said.—"It's almost time for the sun to rise, but you mustn't stir."

"I canna," he said. "I'm sair bruk. But a' my banes are gude.—I'll no gang again to Mine No. 3."

"Why, Mr. McCracken," responded Car'line, seriously, "you'll soon be strong enough. You'll get well right away."

"It's no' that," he said. "I canna wark o' that place. 'Twas aye so. As sune as aught fell in ony

mine, 'twas my sign to gang oot. I maun seek me anither mine when I can tramp. I was ower lang in No. 3. —I'm auld an' I'm bruk. Mayhap there'll be no ither mine for Fergus McCracken.—Gang noo, lass; they're callin'.—I'm weel."

Away went Car'line, feeling better, somehow, he really looked so strong. They were almost a cheerful party at the table in Mrs. Craik's room, and the daylight began to come while they were talking about it.

Mr. Rathburn was the first to go out, and in a moment more he was shouting from the other end of the passageway:

"Caroline! come here!"

Before he could tell her what for she stood beside him, looking toward the bluff.

"I can see him!" she shouted. "Mother, Mrs. Craik's hired man is feeding the cows and pigs. I can see some of our hens too. The water never got to the upper barns.—Andy! There's the bridge over the brook. 'Twasn't all swept away."

"'Cause it was froze down," said Andy as he came on a run. "That's what saved it. Soon's I can get to the back door I can go and see Smith."

"I guess he'll come here," remarked Mrs. Craik; but Mrs. Van Koven said sadly:

"My geese! They all went down the creek, and the ducks went with 'em."

"They could swim," said Andy. "But my boat'll be left high and dry. I'll have to cart it to the Liffenkill after it shrinks to its right size."

That meant the creek, not the boat.

They could see as far as the barns, but they could not know that a hundred men were already at work upon the ruined railway bridge. One gang of them, moreover, had reached and opened the stranded baggage-car, finding at once many reasons for wishing that it had been made water-tight. One half of the other car lay near it, still retaining most of its badly soaked contents; but the other half had been pretty completely shattered, so that its trunks and things were to be sought for at various distances.

"Nobody can guess just where," remarked Mrs. Spruance, concerning part of them, as she and Mrs. Medway, in the main street of Salterville, watched the diminishing outlines of the flood a little later.

"I'm real curious," replied Mrs. Medway, "whether

or not mine actually did float. They said it would, but this is the first chance I ever had to try it."

"Mrs. Medway," interposed her coachman, coming up eagerly, "they tell me the road's bare a'most to the Van Koven's."

"How's the little bridge?" she asked.

"Niver a stun of it's floated aff, ma'am," replied Michael. "It's there as good as ever it was. The road's good sliddin' too."

"Bring the sleigh right here!" she exclaimed. "I'm going to see about Caroline."

That included all the Van Koven household in one word, and Michael hurried after the sleigh. All loose drift snow was gone, of course, but the packed, hard-frozen roadbed was even more slippery than before the thaw. Moreover, the long stretch of it that was bare of water was getting longer rapidly.

"I can't go with you," said Mrs. Spruance, "and I want to ever so much. The general's coming home, and I must be there. What will he say about his speeches?"

"I wish Mr. Medway were here," replied his wife. "But Congress won't adjourn for ever so long. I tele-

graphed him and he'll stay there.—Now, Michael, I don't want anybody else, if Mrs. Spruance won't go."

"They'd crowd the sleigh in a minute," he said. "I'll drive right aff. We'll have room to save some of 'em."

She was already in the sleigh, with a flurried, anxious face that told how deeply she was interested in her errand.

"Drive on!" she said. "I want to see them right away. I may be able to do something. They're just the people I'd like to help.—Faster!"

Other sleighs were getting ready, but theirs was ahead of them all, and Michael trotted his fat horses briskly up the road. It was up and yet it was down, for it sloped from the outer edge of the village, and just beyond the little stone bridge, where the road crossed the Van Koven brook, the water came all the way over.

"It's only a few inches deep," she said. "Drive right on. Don't stop for a little water."

"I'll not, ma'am," he said. "I'll go on as long as they can wade."

He soon had to drive more slowly, nevertheless, for

his team were fetlock deep, and it was almost exciting to push along the edge of the great flood.

"Whoop!" shouted Michael, suddenly. "It's dry in front o' Van Koven's. There's Craik's boy at the gate. They're not all drooned. Hurrah!—G'lang!"

He need not have whipped, for the team sprang forward instantly, as if they had questions of their own to ask, and it was but a moment before they were pulled sharply in, almost upon the very spot where they had once been unhitched from the broken-down barouche.

"Sit still, ma'am!" shouted Michael. "Don't get out. They're coming!"

She was on her feet, for all that, staring excitedly at the house and listening to the sound of voices, for several seemed to be speaking at once. One voice came from a boy who stood by a punt boat, stranded in ice and mud at the left of the door.

"Car'line!" he called out. "Come on! Mrs. Medway's here! In a sleigh!"

At the foot of the stairs inside the man Smith was sending up, with vigorous lungs, whatever he had to tell of cattle, pigs, horses, and the people in the village. At the head of the stairs stood Mr. Craik on his sticks,

evidently about to work his way down, and behind him, tieing her hood, was his wife.

Right past Smith strode Rathburn, as if nothing had ever been the matter with him, and it was something of a curiosity, after all, how Car'line managed to be first at the gate. But, then, her rubbers had been on all the morning, hoping to walk on the lower floor, and so she was ready.

"O Mrs. Medway! I thought you were drowned on the railway—at the bridge——"

"You dear child! I wasn't hurt at all.—I've been so worried about all you people!"

"We're all right," put in Andy; "but Car'line saved your trunk. It came pretty near drowning her, but she went out and got it. There it is."

"My trunk!" almost screamed Mrs. Medway. "It did float, after all."

"Andy saved it as much as I did," said Car'line. "He rowed the boat. The trunk caught in the tree."

There she hesitated and Mr. Rathburn completed the explanation of the wild voyage of Mrs. Medway's "ark," as he called it.

"I wish Mrs. Spruance's trunk had been an ark,"

remarked Mrs. Medway; but by this time old Mr. Craik had caned along within speaking range, and he added:

"That was how we knew about the disaster at the bridge. Did any of the other passengers escape? You was in the rear car. All the forward cars went under. Did anybody get out?"

"Nothing was lost but baggage," said Mrs. Medway a little sharply. "I want to take all of you right away.—Caroline, get your things on. Tell your mother."

"O Mrs. Medway!" exclaimed Mrs. Craik, "if you could first take me up to see what's become of our house!"

"Get right in," she said.—"Come, Caroline.—Will you come, Mr. Craik?"

"I can climb in," he said, suiting the action to the word, and Andy was already on the driver's seat with Michael.

"Mrs. Medway," asked Mrs. Van Koven, from the stoop, "where are you taking Car'line?"

"Only to look at the Craik place. We're coming right back."

"Right away, mother," said Car'line, but Michael's

whip had cracked and his team sprang away along the track where once the snow tunnel had been.

They were all looking straight ahead or off over the flood, but Car'line's eyes caught a swift glimpse of what seemed to her a vast hollow beyond the upheaved roots of the old sycamore. Deep it was, and in it she saw something black and shining, but she did not speak of it then.

"How fast the water goes!" exclaimed Mrs. Craik. "This level will all be clear in an hour or so."

Mrs. Medway's reply consisted of a hurried string of questions that lasted, with the answers, until Michael pulled up his horses and Andy told them—

"Here we are! That's the oak my boat was hitched to—that very branch—all night. There's the house, tipped over among the apple trees, but the barn's gone."

"We've only saved one hen and four chickens," remarked Mr. Craik. "The parlor stove is asticking half way out o' the side window."

"It's a complete wreck!" said Mrs. Craik. "We must build another house higher up, and I'm glad of it. —Thank God, Andy got away!—I don't want to stay here a minute."

"Nor I," said Mrs. Medway. "It's dreadful.—I'm so glad you're all alive!—Michael, drive back. I want to see the things in that trunk. I don't feel sure yet that no water got in."

"'Twould ha' sunk if there did," remarked Andy. "A leak'll sink a boat."

Around whirled the sleigh in a shallow wash of rippling ice water, while Mr. Craik encouraged Michael by saying to him:

"If your team should run away just now they'd probably upset us all into the pond. Not one of us could get ashore."

They were trotting pretty well, and it was hardly more than a minute before Car'line suddenly stood up exclaiming:

"Mr. Rathburn's looking at it! Mother's with him! So is Mr. McCracken!—Drive, quick! I want to see what it is!"

"Why, Caroline!" shouted Mrs. Medway, balancing herself erect with some difficulty, while Michael hauled hard on his reins. "You poor child! It's a vein of coal!"

"Ay, ma'am!" exultingly responded the old miner,

as he leaned against Rathburn and swung his somewhat tattered hat. "It's a' onthracite!—The bonnie lass! Hurrah!"

"O mother!" said Car'line. "I'm so glad! How rich you will be! It's just what father used to dig after."

"O-oh!" was all Mrs. Van Koven could say. "I wish he had found it himself."

Rathburn had stood still, eying with a critical air the black mass which had been so remarkably disclosed. It was he who had brought the others out there to look at it, and he now quietly remarked:

"It answers entirely to the calculations of the State geological survey. It is of the best quality, and I never saw a better outcrop for easy working. It must underlie the whole Van Koven farm."

"So I always told Tom Van Koven," rasped Mr. Craik. "It would be worth something, if we could keep the Liffenkill from running into it and drowning all the miners."

"We can do that, Craik," shouted an entirely newly arrived spectator. "It goes under your farm too.—But, wife, what on earth did you scare me half to death for?"

"Why, husband!" exclaimed Mrs. Medway. "I'm looking at Car'line's mine. What did you come for? Nothing happened to me. Didn't you get my telegram?"

"Indeed I did not," he said; "but I heard that the train was wrecked and I came right on.—Car'line's mine?"

"It isn't mine, it's mother's. I don't know anything about it," said Car'line.

"Humph!" said her mother. "You own all that'll come to you from your father, soon as you're of age, and everything that belongs to me."

"Mother," said Car'line, "I don't want anything! But if that's our coal, I won't let you do another stroke of work as long as you live.—Mr. McCracken, isn't that the other mine you were looking for?"

"Ay, lassie!" he said, chuckling loudly. "It does me gude. I'm no sae badly bruk noo I've seen it. It's fine! Ye'll be pittin' it to wark right awa'?"

"Just as soon as Mr. Rathburn gets home from Europe," she said, and Mrs. Medway added:

"I guess my husband or his men can attend to all that needs to be done meantime. It'll take capital."

"There are loads of it waiting to open such a vein of anthracite as that is," replied Mr. Medway. "But not one of you must stay here any longer. Ruin your health."

"Mrs. Van Koven," said his wife, "that's just what I came for. Pack your things as quick as you can. All you need to take."

"They are all packed now," said Mrs. Van Koven. "But I do hope Mr. Rathburn won't be gone too long. I want to see it done."

"Mr. Craik," said Mr. Medway. "I couldn't get anything but this little cutter. Robinson is coming with his box sleigh after you and your wife. He'll have room."

"And Jim'll come too," said Andy. "I want to show him and the boys what a time we had."

He was just then standing at the heads of the horses, while Michael and Smith were examining the big trunk.

"It's no use," he said to Mr. Medway. "I'll bring a sled for it. There's too much of it."

"Come along then.—Where's Car'line?"

"There she is," said his wife.

She was at the roots of the overturned sycamore,

holding by one of them and peering over into the hollow with a pool of water at the bottom, on the other side of which cropped out the vein of anthracite which had lain there all unseen through so many thousands of years.

Fergus McCracken was evidently recovering somewhat, for he had followed her, and now he said to her:

"Come, lassie, they're waitin'. But I'll tell a thing. No' till this day, since I was born, hae I looked upon the face o' a new mine 'fore a pick struck it. It's kind o' solemn to wan like me, I'm thinkin'. I'm auld an' I'm a bit bruk. Ere lang I'll see that ither mine, but it'll no be onthracite. There'll be no need o' winter fires. It's a' sunshine, look you. I'll say no more, lassie. I'm glad o' your mine."

Car'line could not say a word. In a few minutes more she and her mother were with Mr. and Mrs. Medway on their way, while Jim Robinson and his father and Andy packed the arrived box sleigh with all it could hold.

"I'm so glad to have you all at our house," said Mrs. Medway. "Michael will go right back after the things and Rathburn and McCracken will come in the

cutter. He is just the man to put in charge of such a mine."

"I'll attend to all that," said her husband. "He can spend months in Europe. The railway'll have to run a side track, you know."

"What will Mrs. Spruance say?" began Mrs. Medway, but she suddenly turned to Mrs. Van Koven, exclaiming:

"Your geese!"

"Oh, my geese!" replied Mrs. Van Koven. "They all sailed away down the flood!"

"Why, so they did," said Mrs. Medway, "but they came ashore. They got to my house before you did."

"They did know something, then;" and it was the first time that Mrs. Van Koven had laughed since the flood came.

"Car'line," said Mr. Medway, as if he had been thinking and it was time to speak, "you are a very important person. You own a mine."

"I hope nobody will ever get hurt in it," she said. "Couldn't it be made safe? I mean to talk to Mr. Rathburn about that."

"Floods may come," said he. "You never know

what's in a mine until you find out. But I must say that this was a queer way to find a vein of anthracite."

So said all the crowd that was gathering around the Van Koven place, and the two setters seemed to consider it their duty to bark much at the black ledge behind the roots of the old sycamore.

Fergus McCracken came to stare at it again after the Medway team was driven away, and Andy remarked to him, half confidentially:

"That's Car'line's mine. Ours is all over, under our farm. We can get the coal out, though. Guess we'll all have to build our new houses somewhere else, and where they can't be flooded."

"It's a' the lassie's ain," responded the old miner, chuckling loudly. "Oh, but she's bonnie!"

"Come on, Mack," just then shouted Mr. Rathburn. "You're to go to the Medway place with me. Caroline said so."

"Ay, ay, I'm ready," exclaimed McCracken, his rugged face flushing brightly. "I'll gang wi' her onywhere."

About half an hour later there was a busy, talkative assembly under the rear windows of the Medway man-

sion, and another, as busy and as talkative, in the ample sitting room to which the windows belonged. The geese and ducks may not have been where they were because they expected to see Mrs. Van Koven looking out at them, but they were all fixing their feathers and making remarks.

They were, however, the reason why Mrs. Van Koven was the only person in the room who was not looking on while Mrs. Medway unlocked her great trunk and threw back the lid.

"Hech! mon!" said Fergus McCracken. "It's as dry as a mine. To think o' that thing sailin' doon th' Liffenkill!"

"Caroline!" exclaimed Mrs. Medway, pulling out dresses and things with feverish haste. "It's just so. Not a drop of water got in."

"I'm so glad it came to our house," remarked Car'-line.

"Child!" replied Mrs. Medway. "'Twould never have come on to this place if it hadn't been for you. But I wasn't thinking so much about this old thing. I'm so glad you found your mine. Now you can go to Europe yourself some day."

"She won't go right away," said Mrs. Van Koven hastily from the window. "She'll stay with me for a while. Soon as we get a place to stay in."

"Stay in?" echoed Mrs. Medway. "Why, you're going to stay here. I won't let Caroline leave me on any account. It's as big as a hotel. Rathburn can sail away as soon as he wants to, and Mr. Medway returns to Washington to-night. I won't be left alone again."

Mrs. Van Koven was looking somewhat thoughtful and so was Car'line. but Mrs. Medway spoke again, a little sharply:

"I won't let you think of anything else. Why, Mrs. Van Koven, even your geese knew just where to come."

That was the end of it, for the old miner whispered eagerly:

"Stay, lassie! It's a' weel! Stay!" and just as Car'line raised her head to say, "Yes, mother," Mr. Medway himself exclaimed:

"Stay here? Of course they will!"

THE END.

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